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DRAMATIC PIECES,

FROM THE

G E R M A N.

DRAMATIC PIECES,

FROM THE

G E R M A N.

Translated (probably) by Henry Mackenzie

1 act

I. THE SISTER; *A Drama*, by GOETHE, Author of

THE SORROWS OF WERTER: = *Die Geschwister*

II. THE CONVERSATION OF A FATHER

WITH HIS CHILDREN; By GESNER, Au-

thor of THE DEATH OF ABEL.

*tr. by Gesner from
Diderot*

III. THE SET OF HORSES; *A Dramatic Piece* by

EMDORFF.

*There is no such German
writer as Emdorff.*

*769 - Der Postzug oder die noblen Passionen
stipiel by E. von Ayrenhoff*

K.H.

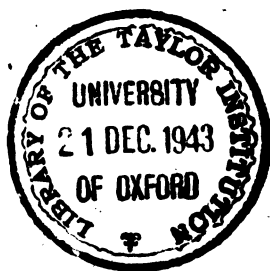
Kornelius

1733-1819

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED for WILLIAM CREECH; and T. CADELL, LONDON,

MDCCKXII.



ADVERTISEMENT.

OF the three following Pieces, the first and second may look forward to the approbation of the Public with some degree of confidence. The Authors are well known, and much admired in this country. The reputation they have acquired by their former works, the Translator hopes, will not be lost by those which now, for the first time, make their appearance in an English dress. The third is one of the most admired little Comedies of the German Stage, and was a peculiar favourite of the late King of Prussia*.

* For an Account of the German Theatre, see the
Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Vol. ii.
p. 180. = *Lecture by Henry Mackenzie.*

T H E

S I S T E R.

*A Drama.
in one act
by Goethe*

William,

(Sitting at a writing-desk, with account-books and papers.)

THIS week again two new customers! If a man will but bestir himself, there is always something to be done; though it should be but little at a time, it tells at last. He that plays for a trifle, is pleased even with small winnings; and his trifling losses are retrievable. What have you got there?

Letter-carrier.

A loaded letter, twenty ducats, and franked half-way.

A

Will.

Will.

Very well, very well, put it down to my account.

Exit. letter-carrier.

Will.

(*Looking at the letter.*) I have been expecting this all day, though I would not own it to myself. Now I may pay off Fabrice at once, and abuse his kindness no farther. He said yesterday to me, 'To-morrow I'll call and see you.' I did not like it. I knew he would not dun me; but then the sight of him would but dun me the more. (*Opening the money-bag, and counting.*) In days of yore, when I lived more freely, the quiet creditor was he whom I could least brook. To him that haunts and besieges me, impudence and all its appendages may be opposed; but the silent one presses directly to my heart, and urges his claim most forcibly, by leaving it to myself. (*Lays the money in a heap upon the table.*) Good God! how I thank thee, that I am out of this difficulty, and once more clear. (*Taking up an account-book.*) Thy blessing in small matters!—upon me too, who so wantonly, so criminally, wasted thy greater bounties!—how can I express it?—But thou
 workest

workest not for me ; nor do I work for myself. Were it not for that dear sweet creature, should I sit here, comparing fractions ? O Mariane ! didst thou know that he, whom thou takest for thy brother, that he labours for thee, from an affection of a very different kind, with far other hopes !—who knows ?—ah !—it is hard—she loves me—true, as her brother.—No ! for shame, that is again to give way to doubt, which never did any good. Mariane, I shall be happy, you will be happy, O Mariane !

Mar.

What do you want, brother, you called me.

Will.

Not I, Mariane.

Mar.

Why then you are merry, thus to make me leave the kitchen for nothing.

Will.

You are a visionary girl ; you take fancies.

Mar.

Sometimes I do. But your voice I know too well, William.

Will.

Will.

Well, and what was you doing there ?

Mar.

I was plucking a couple of pigeons ; I suppose Fabrice will stay supper this evening.

Will.

Perhaps he may.

Mar.

They will soon be ready, and then you need only let me know. He shall teach me that new song.

Will.

I fancy, you like to learn of him ?

Mar.

He sings a song very prettily. Then when you sit at table and hang your head, I instantly have recourse to singing. For I know it always puts you in good humour, when I begin one of your favourite airs.

Will.

Will.

You have remarked that, have you ?

Mar.

Ay, truly ; surely it requires but little art to fathom you men. If you have no more to say, good b'ye. I have a great deal to do yet. Good b'ye.—One kifs, before I go.

Will.

A kifs—pshaw ! but you shall have one by way of desert, if you roast the pigeons well.

Mar.

What plaguy uncivil things these brothers are ! Should Fabrice, or any other good-natured lad, have leave to snatch a kifs, how would they leap up to the very ceiling ; and this nice gentleman here declines it, when offered !—Well, I will burn the pigeons for this.

*Exit.**Will.*

Angel, sweet angel ! let me restrain myself, lest I fall upon her neck and discover all !—Dost thou

thou look down upon us, gentle saint, by whom I was entrusted with this treasure? Yes, we do engage the attention of departed spirits, in their celestial mansions. O Charlotte! couldst thou at parting reward my love to thee more nobly, more innocently, than by leaving thy daughter in my hands! With her thou gavest me all I wanted, thou renewedst the tie between me and life. I loved her as thy child—and now!—I can scarce credit my senses. Once more I seem to behold thee; imagine that fate has restored thee in thy prime; that now I may live and dwell united to thee, which in that early dream of life I could not, I durst not! What happiness! Heavenly Father! 'tis thy gift alone!

Enter Fabrice.

Fabr.

Good evening.

Will.

My dear Fabrice, I am completely happy; I am overwhelm'd this evening with good fortune. We'll have no business at present. There take
your

your hundred dollars ! Make haste, put up the money—return me the bond at another time—and now let us chat.

Fabr.

If you have any farther use—

Will.

If I have any farther use, you say—very well ! I thank you heartily. But at present, take it.—This very evening, the remembrance of Charlotte has been renewed in me, her image has presented itself to my senses—in idea so lively—in form so perfect.

Fabr.

I fancy that is often the case ?

Will.

Had you but known her ! I tell you, she was a most excellent creature.

Fabr.

She was a widow, when you became acquainted with her ?

Will.

Will.

Such purity! such exalted worth!—Yesterday I was reading one of her letters. You are the only person, that ever saw a syllable of our correspondence. (*Goes up to his bureau.*)

Fabr.

(*Aside.*) I wish he would not trouble me now! I have heard his tale too often. Yet at other times I love to hear him; he speaks with so much warmth of heart. But to-day my head is full of other matters; I want to have him in spirits.

Will.

It was in the first days of our acquaintance.
 “The world,” she writes, “begins once more
 “to please me; I was so completely disengaged
 “from it; ’tis for your sake it again pleases me.
 “My heart upbraids me; I feel that I am pre-
 “paring torments both for you and myself.
 “Half a year ago, how well was I prepared to
 “die; I am now no longer so.”

Fabr.

A charming soul!

Will.

Will.

The earth was not worthy of her. Fabrice, I have often told you, how much I am changed by her means. My grief is not to be described, when I looked back and thought, how I had squandered my patrimony. I durst not offer her my hand ; I had no fortune to share with her. I felt, the first time in my life, an impulse to procure a decent competency ; to emerge from that indolent remorse, in which existence was barely supported from day to day. I became industrious ; my success at first was but indifferent—yet I persevered—one joyless year passed over—at length a ray of hope broke in upon me—my little business increased visibly—and she died—I could stay no longer. You have no idea of what I suffered. I could not bear to see that country, where I had lived with her ; yet I could not leave the ground, in which she was laid. A short while before her death, she wrote to me. (*Taking a letter out of the letter-case.*)

Fabr.

It is an excellent letter, you lately read it to me. Pray, William—

B

Will.

Will.

I can repeat it by heart—I am always reading it. When I see her hand-writing, the leaf, upon which her fingers rested, my fancy paints her as if still here.—And she *is* still here. (*The crying of a child is heard.*) Strange that Mariane can never be quiet! She has again brought our neighbour's little boy home with her; she is forever running about with him, and disturbing me at improper hours. (*Goes to the door.*) Mariane, keep peace with that child, or send him away, if he is naughty. We have something to make out here. (*Stands in a pensive attitude.*)

Fabr.

You should not call up those ideas so often.

Will.

These are the lines! these last! the farewell sigh of my departing angel! (*Folds up the letter again.*) You are in the right, it is criminal in me to indulge it. How seldom do we deserve to feel over again those sweetly melancholy moments of our past lives!

Fabr.

Fabr.

Your story always affects me. She left a daughter, you informed me, who soon followed her mother. Were she but alive still, you would at least have something left of her, something for your wasting grief to fix upon.

Will.

(*Turning towards him with eagerness.*) Her daughter? she was a charming rose-bud. She left her to my care.—Fate has shewn me too much kindness!—Fabrice, could I but tell you all.—

Fabr.

Some day, when you are so disposed.

Will.

Why should I not—

Mar.

(*With the boy.*) He wants to bid you good night, brother. Pray don't look sour at him, nor at me neither. You always talk of marrying, and say you wish to have many children.
Children

Children are not to be moved at pleasure, like puppets, so as to cry, only when it does not disturb you.

Will.

If they are *my* children—

Mar.

Yes, indeed that may make some difference.

Fabr.

Do you think so, Mariane?

Mar.

What a happiness must that be! (*Stooping down, to a level with the child, and kissing it.*)
How I love little Christian!—what if he were mine!—He can spell already, he learns it of me.

Will.

And your own child, you think, would be able to *read* by this time?

Mar.

To be sure he would! for then, nothing else would I be doing the live-long day, but dressing
and

and undressing him, teaching and feeding him, making him fine, and the like.

Fabr.

And what must your husband do in the mean time?

Mar.

He should play along with us ; he, I take it, would be as fond of the child as myself. Little Christian must now go home, and bids you good b'ys. (*Leading him up to Will.*) There give him your little hand, and pat him well.

Fabr.

(*Aside.*) What a lovely creature she is, I must speak.

Mar.

(*Leading the child to Fabrice.*) Shake hands with that gentleman too.

Will.

(*Aside.*) She must be mine!—I shall be—It is too much ; I deserve it not. (*Aloud.*) Mariane, send the child away ; entertain Mr Fabrice till supper.

supper-time ; I will only take a hasty turn or two in the street ; I have been sitting all day—

Exit Mar.

—to snatch a little fresh air, under the expanse of heaven ; my heart is so full ; I shall be back in an instant.

Exit.

Fabr.

I must bring this matter to a conclusion. To what purpose conceal it any longer ? Well—my resolution is taken—ay—a lucky thought—I assist her brother, and she—she loves me not, as I love her. And indeed how should she love with ardour !—Charming girl ! Sentiments of friendship are probably all she looks for in me !—We shall see happy days, Mariane !—How fortunately this happens ; as if all had been arranged for my purpose. I must disclose my mind to her—and if her heart reject me not—in her brother's I am secure.

Enter Mar.

Fabr.

Have you sent away the child ?

Mar.

Mar.

I wished much to have kept him—but I know my brother does not like it, and therefore I submit.—Indeed the little rogue is so fond of me, if he were permitted he would be always with me.

Fabr.

Is he not troublesome?

Mar.

Not in the least—When left to himself he is so wild, and yet if I give him the least hint, he is as quiet as a lamb!—A flattering little pufs! how he cares for me, I can scarce get him to leave me.

Fabr.

(*Aside.*) Amiable nature!

Mar.

Indeed he loves me more than his mother.

Fabr.

You are a mother to him.

Mar.

Mar.

(Stands lost in thought.)

Fabr.

(Looking at her for some time.) Does the name of mother make you sad ?

Mar.

Not sad ; only I was thinking—

Fabr.

Well what ? sweet Mariane.

Mar.

I was thinking—why nothing at all. I cannot tell you what I was thinking.

Fabr.

Pray have you never considered—

Mar.

What odd questions you ask ?

Fabr.

I hope Fabrice may be permitted—

Mar.

Mar.

Considered?—no, Fabrice, never.—Or if at any time, such an idea did pass through my head, it was gone again in an instant. To leave my brother were to me intolerable—impossible—however charming the prospect might otherwise be.

Fabr.

Very odd indeed! When you live together in the same town, can that be called leaving him?

Mar.

It will never do! who would keep house for him? who take care of him?—a maid-servant? or must he even marry?—No, it cannot be.

Fabr.

Could he not live with you? might not your husband be his friend? might not all three keep house together, and every thing be as agreeable as at present, or perhaps more so? might not this be a means of lightening your brother's fatiguing occupation? O what a life that might be!

*C**Mar.*

Mar.

So one would think. When I consider it, 'tis very plausible. And yet after all, I can't help thinking it would not do.

Fabr.

I do not understand you.

Mar.

Yet it's just as I say.—The instant I awake I listen whether my brother is stirring; if I hear nothing, in the twinkling of an eye I am out of bed, and in the kitchen, and before the maid can rise, kindle the fire, and boil the water, till it bubble again, that he may find his coffee ready, the moment he opens his eyes.

Fabr.

Dear busy creature!

Mar.

And then I sit down and knit stockings for my brother, and bustle up and down, and ask his opinion of them ten times running, whether he thinks them long enough, whether the leg will fit neatly, whether the foot be not too short,
till

till he is sometimes out of patience with me. And no wonder, as it is often a mere pretence to be doing something about him, to make him look at me, after writing by the hour, for fear it should give him the spleen. For he is always the better for looking at me ; I read it in his eyes, though he will never own it. Sometimes I smile in secret, when he affects to be grave or angry. He is in the right to do so ; else I should tease him all day long.

Fabr.

Happy man !

Mar.

No, 'tis I that am happy. If I had not him, I should be completely miserable. All I do is for myself, and to me it appears as if I did all for him ; since even when I am busy for myself, I am always thinking of him.

Fabr.

And suppose yourself employed in the same way for a husband, how completely happy would he be, how grateful would he be, and what a sweet domestic life would you lead !

Mar.

Mar.

Sometimes I indulge the fancy, and then have a long tale to tell myself, while I sit at my work, of what would be, and what might be. But when I come back to reality, it is never quite the thing.

Fabr.

How so ?

Mar.

Where shall I find a husband, who would be content to hear me say, "I will love you," while I am forced to add, "More than my brother
" I cannot possibly love you, I must have leave
" to continue my attention to him as formerly."
" ly."—That you know, would never do !

Fabr.

Your duty would induce you to shew a proper attention to your husband, and inclination would not long be wanting to second duty.

Mar.

That is the knotty point ! It is not so easy to direct affection, as to transfer property. Affec-
tion

tion cannot be made to change masters every quarter, like a bad servant.

Fabr.

A great deal may be done.

Mar.

I cannot think so. When he is sitting at table; his head resting upon his hand, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, absorbed in silent thought—O, I could sit and gaze at him, by the half-hour. He is not handsome, I now and then say to myself,—yet I love so to look at him.—’Tis true, I feel, his solitude is partly on my account; ’tis true, the first glance of his eye, when he looks up again, tells me so; and that goes a great way.

Fabr.

That’s the whole, Mariane! Think then, a husband who should thus care for you!

Mar.

Another thing is, your humours. William has his humours too: they do not hurt me in him, in any other man they would be intolerable.

table. His are silent humours. Yet I sometimes feel it, when in his rougher moods, he spurns at a gentle, well-meant, kind expression. —It hurts me; but only for a moment; and though I grumble at him, it is rather to see him neglect my love, than that I love him less.

Fabr.

But supposing a man should be found, who, apprised of that, should still venture to offer you his hand?

Mar.

No such man will be found! and then the question is whether I could venture upon him.

Fabr.

Why not?

Mar.

No such man will be found!

Fabr.

Mariane, you have found him.

Mar.

Fabrice?

Fabr.

Fabr.

Here he stands before you. Shall I make a long speech? Shall I give vent to what my heart has so long kept secret? I love you, that you knew long ago; I now offer you my hand; that you did not expect. Never did I see a girl that so little considered, what feelings she excited in others, as you do.—Mariane, it is no inconsiderate hot-headed lover, who addresses you; I know you, I have fixed upon you; my house is prepared; will you be mine?—I have experienced many crosses in love, and more than once resolved to end my days a bachelor.—And now you have—nay, don't be coy; you know me! Your brother and I are agreed; no purer connection can be conceived.—Open your heart!—One word, Mariane!

Mar.

Dear Fabrice, give me time, I own I have a regard for you.

Fabr.

Tell me you love me; your brother shall keep his place, I will be his brother, we will care for him jointly. My fortune added to his will
rid

rid him of many a weary hour; he will take courage, he will—Mariane, I wish not to over-persuade you. (*Taking her hand.*)

Mar.

Fabrice, I never had the thought; into what streights have you brought me,—

Fabr.

One word only! May I hope?

Mar.

Speak to my brother.

Fabr.

(*Kneeling.*) Sweet angelic creature!

Mar.

(*After a moment's pause.*) Alas! what have I said!

Exit.

Fabr.

Mariane is mine! Yet she may still continue to be indulged in her innocent fondness for her brother;

brother ; it will abate gradually as we become better acquainted ; and he shall be no loser by it. How sweet is it to love, and to meet with a kind return from the object of our affection ! It awakens in us all the gay dreams of our early youth.—William shall live with us. At all events, I have long wished to enlarge a little the scrupulous oeconomy of that good man ; now that I am his brother-in-law, it will easily be brought about. He will else grow quite melancholy by perpetually revolving in his mind those endless scruples and considerations of his. Now, all will go well!—he shall have more room to breathe in ; Mariane will be happily married—and that is no trifle ;—I shall be settled in a domestic way, before it be too late—which I take to be a matter of some moment.

Re-enter William.

Fabr.

Have you finished your walk ?

Will.

I went to the market-place, then up Parsonage-street, and back by the Exchange. I have

D

an

an odd sensation, when I walk through the town at night. To see how all are either gone or going to rest from the fatigues of the day, nothing stirring, but the industry of the penurious retailer. To behold a creature, possessed of reason, determining the exact weight of a pitiful pennyworth, with the same anxious care, with which a statesman adjusts the balance of power between rival realms.—Odd as it may appear, Fabrice, it always excites in my mind a train of the most interesting reflections.

Fabr.

Every man observes in his own way. Hundreds, I dare say, have passed through the same street, without once noticing what to you appeared so striking.

Will.

We acquire a regard for our own occupations; to me small-dealing is become respectable, ever since I have known by experience, what labour it takes, to earn a dollar, by single groats. (*Stands lost in thought a few moments.*) I fell into an odd reverie, while I was walking. So many different things presented themselves, and crossed one another in my mind—and what engaged my inmost soul—(*Becomes pensive.*)

Fabr.

Fabr.

(*Aside.*) How unaccountable this is! the moment he is by, I have no heart to confess my love to Mariane.—But I must tell him what has happened.—(*Aloud.*) Pray tell me, William, you had a thought of changing your lodgings? You are cramped here, and pay a high rent. Have you any other in view?

Will.

(*Absent.*) No.

Fabr.

I was thinking, we might mutually assist one another. You know the house left me by my father, I occupy the upper story only, you might take possession of the ground floor, as you are not likely soon to marry. You will have the court-yard, and a small warehouse for your goods, and may pay me a moderate house-rent; it will be an advantage to us both.

Will.

You are very kind. Indeed it now and then occurred to me, when I called upon you, and saw so much room unemployed, while I am
forced

forced to make so poor a shift.—But then, there are other considerations—upon the whole, we may as well drop it—it will not do.

Fabr.

Why not ?

Will.

Suppose now I should marry ?

Fabr.

That might be managed. While you remain a bachelor, there is room for your sister and you, and it would answer just as well with a wife.

Will.

(*Smiling.*) And what am I to do with my sister ?

Fabr.

Why, she may perhaps come up to me.

Will.

(*Silent.*)

Fabr.

Fabr.

To be serious, and to deal plainly with you—
I love your sister, shall I have your consent to
marry her?

Will.

What was that?

Fabr.

I ask your consent to marry Mariane, shall
I have it, my friend? I love her—I have
weighed the matter well, I have considered it;
she alone, you alone, you have power to make
me as happy as I can possibly be in this world.
Do not refuse me.

Will.

(*In confusion.*) You know not what you ask.

Fabr.

Ah, how well I know it! Would you have
me tell you all I wish for, all I shall possess,
with her for my wife, and you for my brother-
in-law.

Will.

Will.

(Awaking suddenly from his reverie, and speaking harshly.) No ! by no means !

Fabr.

What do you mean ?—you grieve me—such an aversion ! Since you must have a brother-in-law sooner or later, such as chance may offer you, why not me ? me whom you know, whom you love ; at least I always thought—

Will.

Leave me !—it turns my brain.

Fabr.

I must open my mind without reserve. Upon you alone depends my fate. Her heart inclines to favour me ; you must have observed that. Perhaps you are the greater favourite ;—no matter. The husband will take place of the brother ; I shall rise to your level, you will sink to mine ; and we shall all be happy.—No connection was ever formed more naturally, or promised such advantages to all concerned in it.

Will.

*Will.**(Speechless.)**Fabr.*

Therefore, my dear friend, to complete all—
 Give me your consent, your approbation! tell
 her you are pleased with it, you are happy in it
 —her consent I have.

Will.

Her consent?

Fabr.

She just threw it out, and with a parting
 glance, which spoke more than the longest stay
 could have done. Her confusion, her love, her
 willingness, her trembling, O! it was charm-
 ing.

Will.

No, I say.

Fabr.

I do not comprehend you; I feel that you
 have no aversion to me, and yet to treat me
 thus? Pray do not stand not in the way of her
 happiness,

happiness, of my happiness! I can't but think you will enjoy it along with us!—Do not refuse my wishes, your content! your kind consent!

Will.

(Struck dumb, by the force of contending passions.)

Fabr.

You astonish me.

Will.

Her?—her you would have?

Fabr.

What is the matter?

Will.

And she you?

Fabr.

She answered as became her virgin-modesty.

Will.

Leave me!—Marlane!—But this my mind foreboded.

Fabr.

Fabr.

Do pray tell me—

Will.

Tell—a curse!—’Twas this that fat brooding upon my soul, all the evening, like a thunderstorm.—One flash—and I am struck.—Take her, take her!—my darling, my all!

*Fabr.**(Gazing at him in dumb astonishment.)**Will.*

Take her!—and to make thee sensible what it is, thou takest from me. (*A pause—he strives to compose himself.*) I told thee of Charlotte, that angel, she fled from my arms, and in her place left me her image, her daughter—and this daughter—I deceived thee—she is not dead; this daughter is Mariane!—Mariane is not my sister.

Fabr.

Ha!—this was indeed unlooked for.

Will.

And from you could I ever expect such usage!
—Why did I not follow the impulse of my heart,
E and

and refuse to admit you into my house, as I did every one else, the first days after my arrival here? To you alone I opened this sanctuary, and you,—you contrived to gain upon me by good nature, friendship, and kind offices, while your seeming coldness to women lulled asleep all suspicion! I who was apparently her brother, thought your love to her truly fraternal; and if at times I inclined to suspect more, I rejected the thought as ungenerous, conceived her kind behaviour to you, to flow from the angelic goodness of her heart; that regarded the whole world with an eye of tenderness—And you!—And she—

Fabr.

I care not to hear any thing farther, nor have I one word more to say. So, good night!

Exit.

Will.

Depart! Thou takest away with thee my all, my whole happiness. So completely cut off, so snatched away every prospect—the nearest;—at once—on the brink—and demolished the magic bridge of gold, by which I was to be conducted to celestial bliss. Gone! and by means of
of

of him, of that traitor ! who has so highly abused my frankness, my confidence !—O William, William, and is it come to this at length, that thou must be unjust to so good a man !—What is his crime ?—Thy hand is against me, and thou art just, O all-avenging fate !—And, you, ye gloomy phantoms of my troubled brain ! much-injured objects of my guilty pleasures ! Why do ye haunt me now, —now, at this critical moment !—O pardon me, it is long past.—The stings of remorse, have revenged, severely revenged your wrongs, upon their unhappy author !—I appeared to love you ; I believed that I loved you, by unmeaning attentions I unlocked your hearts, and rendered you miserable !—O pardon, and cease to disquiet me—Shall I be thus punished ?—Shall I love Mariane ? my last best hope, object and end of all my cares ?—It cannot, it cannot be ! (*Remains silent.*)

Mar.

(*Approaching with visible concern.*) Brother !

Will.

Ah !

Mar.

Mar.

Dear brother, forgive me, forgive me, I intreat thee. You are angry, I was afraid it would be so. I have acted foolishly—I am strangely perplexed.

Will:

(*Composing himself.*) What is the matter, child?

Mar.

Would to God, I could tell you.—My head is in such confusion.—Fabrice wants to marry me, and I—

Will.

(*Somewhat severe.*) Speak out, you have confessed?

Mar.

No, not for the world! Never, never will I marry him, I cannot marry him.

Will.

What a different account this is.

Mar.

Mar.

Surprising indeed ! Why, you are quite unkind, brother ; I would willingly leave you, and wait for a more favourable hour, but I must ease my heart at once. Once for all, I cannot marry Fabrice.

Will.

(*Rising and taking her by the hand.*) How, Marianne ?

Mar.

He was here, and said so many things, and made so many representations, that I imagined, it might be possible. He was so urgent, and in an evil hour, I bid him speak with you.—He took it as a mark of my consent, and that instant I felt, that it could not be.

Will.

He has been with me.

Mar.

I intreat, I conjure you, by all the love I feel for you, by all the love you bear to me, remonstrate with him, set all again to rights.

Will.

*Will.**(Aside.)* Gracious God !*Mar.*

Do not be angry. Neither must he be angry. We will again live together as before, and so on, for ever.—For with thee alone can I live, with thee alone will I live. It has always lain latent in my soul, this occurrence has at last roused it, forcibly roused it.—Thee I love, and thee only.

Will.

Mariane !

Mar.

Best of brothers ! The last few minutes—I cannot tell you, what a confused hurry there has been in my heart. 'Tis with me, as lately at the fire in the market-place ; all was wrapped in a cloud of smoke, till at once it raised up the roof, and the whole house burst into flames. Leave me not, drive me not from thee, O my brother !

Will.

Things cannot always remain as at present.

Mar.

Mar.

'Tis that, which grieves me so!—With pleasure I will give you my word, never to marry, always to care for you; yes, always.—On the floor above us dwells an old bachelor, with his maiden sifter;—'tis whimsical—Often, in my most chearful moments, I reflected upon the time when I shall become so old and shrivelled—well, if only we two remain together.

Will.

(*His hand upon his heart, half aside.*) O my heart, if thou endure this, against what emotion wilt thou not be proof!

Mar.

You, I fear, cannot think as I do, some day or other you will take a wife; and I shall be grieved at it, however I shall be disposed to love her.—No one loves you as I do, none can so love you.

Will.

(*Endeavouring to speak.*)

Mar.

Mar.

You are always so reserved, and I, I am always on the point of disclosing my whole mind; without daring to do it. God be praised, chance has at last set my tongue at liberty.

Will.

No more, Mariane.

Mar.

Do not stop me, let me say all! Afterwards I will go back to the kitchen, and sit down quietly to my work, for days together; only now and then cast a look at you, as much as to say, Well, you know!

Will.

(Overwhelmed with joy, and unable to speak.)

Mar.

You might long perceive it, and have perceived it, since my mother's death, how I grew up from my infancy, and was always with you.—I tell you, I feel more pleasure, in being with you, than gratitude for your more than brotherly

ly

ly kindness. Insensibly you have so taken possession of my whole heart, of my whole head, that even now, it is with difficulty, that any thing else can occupy the smallest portion. I know well you sometimes laugh, at my reading novels; you did so in regard to Julia Mandeville; and I asked whether that Henry, or what else is his name, did not look like you?—You laughed—I did not like it.—The next time, I was silent. Yet what I said I meant seriously; for all the most amiable, the worthiest of men, I thought, must look like you. 'Twas you I saw walking in the garden, riding, travelling, fighting. (*She endeavours to stifle a laugh.*)

Will.

What is the matter with you?

Mar.

Well then, to confess all—when a lady was very pretty, and very good, and very much beloved—and very much in love—it was always myself. Only at last when it came to the unravelling of the plot, and after all their difficulties they were married—what an open-hearted prettler I am.

F

Will.

Will.

Go on! (*Turning from her.*) Let me drain this cup of pleasure.—God of heaven! preserve my senses.

Mar.

What I could least bear, was, when a young couple were in love, and at last it turned out that they were related, or that they were brother and sister—I could have thrown Miss Fanny into the fire!—I did so weep!—it is so very hard a case! (*Turns away and bursts into tears.*)

Will.

(*Falling about her neck.*) Mariane!—my Mariane!

Mar.

No! William, no! I will never let thee go! Thou art mine!—I hold thee fast!—I cannot let thee go!

Enter

Enter Fabr.

Mar.

Ha, Fabrice, you are just come in time ! My heart is open and strong enough to tell you all. I made you no promise. You must be our friend : I will never marry you.

Fabr.

(*Cold and severe.*) I thought so. You, William, throwing your whole weight into the opposite scale, I must needs be found too light. I am come back, to unburthen my heart of what must come out some time. I give up all pretensions, and perceive matters have already come to an issue ; well I am at least happy, in having been, though involuntarily, the occasion of it,

Will.

Blaspheme not at this critical moment, nor rob thyself of feelings, which a pilgrimage over the whole globe could not procure thee. Look upon this dear—she is completely mine—and knows not—

Fabr.



Fabr.

(Somewhat satirical.) She not know?

Mar.

What do I not know?

Will.

Could I now lie, Fabrice?

Fabr.

(Startled.) Does she indeed not know it?

Will.

As I said,

Fabr.

Be happy then in the possession of each other,
You deserve it.

Mar.

What does he mean?

Will.

(Embracing her.) Thou art mine, Mariane!

Mar.

Mar.

What can this be? May I return that kiss?
O brother, what a kiss was that!

Will.

Not the reserved and formal kiss of a brother,
but the heart-felt one of a lover, made supremely,
made eternally happy. (*At her feet.* *Mariane*,
you are not my sister. Charlotte was *your*
mother, not *mine*.)

Mar.

Oh!

Will.

Thy lover!—from this moment thy husband,
if thou reject me not.

Mar.

O tell me, how was this possible?

Fabr.

Enjoy what God himself can give you only
once! Put off your curiosity at present, *Mariane*.
You will find time enough for explanation.

Mar.

Mar.

(Looking at him.) No ! it cannot be !

Will.

My charmer ! my spouse !

Mar.

(Embracing him.) O William, and can it be ?

END OF THE SISTER.

THE

CONVERSATION, &c.

1871

1871

THE
CONVERSATION
OF A
FATHER WITH HIS CHILDREN;
OR,
THE DANGER OF DISREGARDING THE
LAWS.

by Gesner.

MY father was a man of uncommon good sense, and famous over the whole country for the strict virtue and piety of his conduct. He was frequently applied to by his fellow-citizens to settle their disputes; and many, to whose persons he was an utter stranger, entrusted him with the execution of their last wills. The poor lamented his loss, when he died. While he lay ill, both high and low shewed how deeply they

G were

were interested in his recovery ; and when it came to be known, that he was near his end, the whole town appeared dejected. His image will always be present to my fancy. Methinks, I see him seated in his easy chair ; how placid his looks ! how serene his countenance ! Methinks I hear him still ! The following is the history of one of our evenings, and a specimen of the manner in which the rest were spent.

It was winter, and we were sitting by the fire, round about him ; the Abbé, my sister, and I. My son, says he, after a conversation upon the inconveniencies attending a great name—my son, we have both of us made some noise in the world, but with this difference: What noise you have made with your tools has disturbed your own peace ; but I have disturbed the quiet of others. Whether this joke of the good old smith was a bad or a good one, I shall not here determine ; but no sooner had he uttered it, than he began to grow pensive, and to look at us with unusual attention. What makes you so grave, father, said the Abbé ? I was thinking, replied he, that the name of an honest man, though the most desirable of all, is attended with its peculiar dangers, even to such as enjoy it deservedly.

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It makes me shudder, added he, after a short pause, whenever I think of it. You will scarce believe me, children, but, at a certain period of my life, I was upon the point of ruining you ; I was indeed,—of utterly ruining you.

Abbé.

How so ?

Father.

How so ? You shall hear :

But before I begin, (*to my sister*) child, raise this pillow a little, it has sunk too low. And come you here, (*to me*) draw my night-gown over me; the fire burns my legs.—You all knew the clergyman of Thivet ?

Sister.

That good old priest, that used to walk four miles in a morning, at an hundred years of age ?

Abbé.

And who died, at an hundred and one, upon hearing of the death of a brother of his, who had lived with him, and seen ninety-nine ?

Father.

Father.

The very same.

Abbé.

Well?

Father.

Well : His heirs were poor people, accustomed to beg in the streets, up and down in the country, and at the church-doors. These wretches sent me a commission, empowering me to go to the place, and secure for them the effects of their cousin, the late clergyman. How could I refuse poor folks a piece of service, which I had often done for rich families? I went to Thivet, applied to the magistrates, had every thing sealed, and waited the arrival of the heirs, who very soon made their appearance. There were about ten or twelve of them : Women, without stockings or shoes, and next to naked, with infants at their breasts, whom they held, wrapped up in their filthy aprons ; old men, covered with rags, who had crawled thither, with each a bundle of tattered garments, tied up in clouts, which they hung upon a stick, and carried over their shoulders. A scene of the most loathsome distress !—

Think,

Think, then, what their joy must have been, at the prospect of receiving about 10,000 livres a-piece. For what the old priest had left amounted, upon a hasty computation, to 100,000 livres at the least. The seals were broke open; the whole day was spent in taking inventories; night came on; the wretches went off, and I was left alone. I was in a hurry to put them in possession of their inheritance, wishing to be rid of them, that I might soon return to my own affairs. Under a writing-desk stood an old trunk, without lid, full of all kinds of useless scraps; old letters, scrawls intended for answers, bills of ancient standing, with receipts in full; blank receipts for payments; old account books, and the like. In such cases, however, nothing is passed over, every thing must be read. I had nearly completed this troublesome business, when a paper of some length fell into my hands; and can you guess what that paper was?—It was a will! signed by the priest! a will, of so old a date, that all the persons, whom he had appointed his executors, had been dead twenty years! a will, by which he cut off the poor creatures, who were now asleep in the house, from every part of his possessions, and made the Fremins, those rich Parisian bookfellers, whom you cannot but know,

know, his sole heirs. I leave you to guess at my astonishment and grief. What was I now to do with this writing? Should I burn it? Why should I not? Was there not every mark of its being rejected? Was not the place where I found it, as well as the papers with which it lay mixed, and to which it bore the strongest resemblance, a sufficient testimony against it, without saying a word as to the flagrant injustice of its contents? Such were my thoughts upon the occasion. Representing to myself, at the same time, the disconsolate situation of the poor heirs, in a moment disappointed of their hopes, I gradually drew nearer to the fire, holding the will in my hand. But other thoughts taking place of the former, a certain anxiety, lest I might be mistaken, in deciding upon so important a case; diffidence in my own judgment, the fear of hearkening rather to the voice of compassion in my own breast, than to that of justice;—all these considerations suddenly restrained me, and I spent the remainder of the night in doubt, whether to destroy the unjust deed or not. More than once I held it over the fire, unable to resolve whether to drop it or withdraw it. At last I resolved to keep it: One minute sooner or later, I might have taken the contrary resolution.

tion. In my uncertainty how to proceed, it occurred to me, to take the opinion of some man of judgment upon the affair. Accordingly, at break of day, I mounted my horse, rode in full gallop up to town, passed by my own house, without ever calling, and alighted at the seminary. This was then inhabited by the Peres de l'Oratoire ; one of whom was famous for his depth of judgment, and piety of conduct. His name was Father Bouin ; and he had the character of being the greatest casuist of the whole diocese.

So far my father had proceeded in his narrative, when he was interrupted by the arrival of Dr Bissei, the friend and physician of our house ; who, having inquired after the state of my father's health, and felt his pulse, having added something to his regimen, and deducted something from it,—took a seat, and began to chat with us,

My father made inquiries about several of his patients ; among the rest, concerning an old rogue of a steward of Mr Mefanger, formerly mayor of the town, who had much perplexed and hurt his master's affairs, forged bills in his name, destroyed writings of importance, embezzled considerable sums, and in short committed

mitted a number of rogueries ; of which the greatest part having been proved upon him, he was then upon the eve of losing at least his reputation, and property, and perhaps his life too. This affair at that time engaged the whole province.—The Doctor said the fellow was very ill; yet he was not without hopes of curing him.

Father.

That will be doing him a bad piece of service.

Diderot, the Son.

And into the bargain, doing a very bad action.

Doct.

A bad action? I should be glad to hear your reasons for that opinion, if you please?

Diderot, the Son.

My reasons are. that, I think, there are villains enough in the world, and that there is no need to detain such as are about to leave it.

Doct.

My business is to cure, not to judge him, I will cure him, because that is my trade, the magistrates

gistrates may afterwards have him hanged, since that is theirs.

Diderot, the Son.

But, Doctor, there is a calling common to every good citizen, to you as well as me, and that is, to exert ourselves to the utmost in the service of the public. Now I can never conceive what good can be done to the public, by preserving the life of a criminal, from whom the laws would have freed us in a short time.

Doct.

But, pray, who is to pronounce him a criminal? Am I?

Diderot, the Son.

No; but his actions.

Doct.

And who is to judge of the nature of his actions? Am I?

Diderot, the Son.

No, Doctor, but permit me to alter the case a little: Let us suppose a criminal, whose crimes

H

are

are notorious, to be taken ill ; you are called ; you go in a hurry ; the curtains are undrawn, and you discover a Cartouche, or Nivet. Would you cure either of them ?

Dr Biffei, after hesitating a moment, answered resolutely, that he would ; he would forget the name of his patient, and only concern himself about his disease, it being that alone upon which he had any right to decide ; for, if he were to go one step farther, there was no knowing where to stop. If it were necessary that an examination into the conduct and morals of a patient should precede a physician's prescription, men's lives would soon become the victims of ignorance, passion, and prejudice. What you apply to Nivet, a Molinist would apply to a Jansenist, and a Papist to a Protestant. If you keep me from Cartouche's bed, a fanatic will drive me from that of an Atheist. It gives us trouble enough to fix the dose of our medicine, without submitting to the drudgery of determining whether the measure of our patient's sins allow us to employ our remedies or not.

But, Doctor, replied I, suppose, after the completion of your cure, the first use he should make
of

of his recovery, were to murder your friend, what would you say to that? Lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me, would you not repent your having cured him? Would you not exclaim with indignation, *why did I give him my assistance? why did I not leave him to die?* And would not that reflection be sufficient to embitter the remainder of your life?

Doct.

My grief certainly would be excessive; but still I should have no remorse of conscience.

Diderot, the Son.

And what remorse of conscience could you have, for, I will not say, *killing* a mad dog, that is not the case here; but only for *suffering* such an animal *to die*? Come, Doctor, I have a little more courage than you, and am not to be led astray by empty sophistry. Suppose me for once a physician: Upon looking at the patient to whom I am called, I discover a villain; I address him as follows: Execrable wretch! die, I entreat you, as soon as possible; you can do no better either for yourself or others. I know very well what would remove the pleurisy that now torments you; but I shall be very careful not to prescribe it. I am not
such

such an enemy to my country, as to restore you to it, and to prepare for myself a source of endless sorrow in the fresh crimes which you would commit. I will not be a partaker of your wickedness. Were a man to conceal you in his house, he would be punished for it; and can I consider as innocent the man that preserves your life? Impossible. All that I am sorry for is, that, by leaving you to die, I prevent you from suffering all the rigour of capital punishment. Dream not then that I shall take any pains to save the life of a wretch, whom I am bound to prosecute, both in common equity, and from a regard to the good of society, and the safety of my fellow-creatures. No! you may die for me! And none shall have it to say, that; by my skill and endeavours, there is one monster more in the world!

Doct.

Good night, Sir. But—drink less coffee after dinner, do you hear?

Father.

O, but consider how fond I am of coffee.

Doct.

Doct.

Well then, at least take a good deal of sugar with it.

Sister.

But, Doctor, sugar will heat him!

Doct.

Nonsense!—Your servant, Mr philosopher!

Diderot, the Son.

One word more, Doctor! During the late plague at Marseilles, a set of villains dispersed themselves in the houses, plundering, murdering, and taking advantage of the universal consternation, to enrich themselves by various iniquitous practices. One of the gang was seized with the plague; a grave-digger, belonging to those appointed by the police to remove the dead bodies, found and knew him. These people were accustomed to throw the corpses out of the houses into the street. As soon as the grave-digger saw the villain, Rascal, says he, is it you? and instantly laying hold of his legs, dragged him to the window. O! cries the fellow, I am not dead! You are dead enough, replied the other; and

and in a moment threw him down from the third story. Now, Doctor, I assure you, this same grave-digger, who got rid of the infected robber with so good a grace, was, in my opinion, far less to blame than an expert physician like yourself would have been, had he cured him:—and now you may go, if you please.

Doct.

My good Mr philosopher, I am willing to admire both your wit and your zeal as much as you please; but your morality shall never be mine, and, I think, I may venture a considerable wager, it will never be the Abbé's.

Abbé.

You may safely venture it.

I was just going to enter the lists with the Abbé, when my father turning to me, You are contending, says he, against your own cause.

Diderot, the Son.

How so?

Father.

Father.

Why, I suppose, you wish the rascal, Mr Me-fanger's steward, dead, don't you? then, pray, only let the Doctor do his business.—But, let me see, where did I leave off with my story?

Sister.

You were come to Father Bouin.

Father.

I laid the case before him. Nothing can be more laudable (said Father Bouin) than the feelings of compassion that possess your heart for these unhappy heirs. Suppress the will, give them your assistance, I am content; but only upon condition that you make up to the heirs by will exactly the sum, of which, by so doing, you deprive them; neither more nor less.—But my back feels cold; I suppose the Doctor has left the door open. Go, child, shut it.

Sister.

I will; but, I hope, you will not proceed till I come back.

Father.

Father.

No, by no means.

After making us wait a little, my sister returned. It is the same fool, said she, (somewhat chagrined) that fixed two advertisements over his door : upon the one, *this house to be sold for 20,000 livres, or let for 1200 livres a year, without lease* ; upon the other, *20,000 livres to be put out for a year at 6 per cent.*

Diderot, the Son.

A fool, sister ? Only suppose, that what you take to be two advertisements is in reality but one ; and that the advertisement about the loan is a translation of the other concerning letting the house.—But what have we to do with that ? —Well, and what said Father Bouin farther ?

Father.

And who gave you the right (continued he) to pronounce upon the validity of deeds ? Who empowered you to comment upon the intentions of the dead ?—But, Father Bouin, think of the trunk.—Who, pray, empowered you to decide, whether this will was purposely thrown aside, or
only

only mislaid by accident? Did you never chance to find in some corner of your shop a paper of importance which you had dropped through carelessness?—But, Father Bouin, consider the date, and the injustice of the writing.—Pray, who gave you a right to decide upon the justice or injustice of this deed, and to declare that to be an unjustifiable gift, which, for ought you know, may be a mere restitution, or some other lawful action, of which you may figure a hundred?—But, Father Bouin, consider the heirs at law, and their poverty; and this distant relation, of a collateral branch, and his opulence.—Who gave you the right of judging what the testator owed either to his near relations, with whom you are unacquainted, or to the booksellers, of whom you have as little knowledge?—But, Father Bouin, consider the heap of letters from the Fremins, which the testator had not once taken the trouble to open.—For that is a circumstance (said my father to us) which I forgot to tell you; among the heaps of papers, where I found the fatal will, lay twenty, thirty, or more, letters of the Fremins, and all with their seals unbroken.—Well, says Father Bouin, neither trunk, nor date, nor letters, are of any avail here, no *ifs* nor *buts* can be admitted; no man is per-

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mitted

mitted to break the laws, to dive into the counsels of the dead, and to command other men's property. If Providence has decreed, by the fortuitous preservation of this will, to punish either your clients, or the heirs by will, or the testator himself, for this is by no means clear, we must rest contented.

After hearing so clear and determined a decision from the most judicious of all our clergy, I stood confounded and trembling ; and reflected what might have become of myself and you, my children, had I destroyed the will, as I had so often been tempted to do. I might afterwards have been tormented with doubts, and had I then consulted Father Bouin ;—O, I must have made restitution ! no doubt I must have done it ! and you had been ruined !

Sister.

And so, father, you had to go back to the parsonage, and to tell the poor people, that they had no right to any thing there ; and that they might return as they were come. How could you, so compassionate a heart as you have, muster courage sufficient for the purpose ?

Father.

Father.

Upon my word, that is more than I know myself. At first, I had thoughts of divesting myself of my commission, and putting another in my place. But then he might have proceeded with the utmost rigour and brutality, he might have collared and cudgelled the poor wretches ; whereas, it would possibly be in my power to alleviate their misfortunes. I returned therefore the same day to Thivet. My sudden absence, as well as the arrangements I had made previous to my departure, had alarmed them; and the sorrowful countenance with which I now made my appearance, confirmed their suspicions. I endeavoured however to hide my concern as well as I could.

Diderot, the Son.

That was ill enough, I dare say.

Father.

I began, by securing all the valuables, and getting together a number of people into the house, to assist me in case of necessity. I then opened the cellar and granaries, which I gave up entirely to the poor fellows ; bidding them
eat

eat and drink, and divide the wine, corn, and other eatables among themselves.

Abbé.

But, Father!—

Father.

I know very well they had as little right to this as to the rest.

Diderot, the Son.

Pray now, Abbé, why need you interrupt us?

Father.

Upon that—pale as death, and with trembling limbs, I opened my mouth, but could not find a word to say. I sat down. got up again, began to speak, and still could not put my thoughts into words. I wept. The people in great consternation flocked about me, exclaiming on all sides, Well, but, good Sir, what is the matter? —Matter!—replied I.—There is a will, a will which disinherits you. My exertion, in pronouncing these few words, was so great, I had almost fainted.

Sister,

Sister.

That I can easily conceive.

Father.

What a scene, O my children! what a dreadful scene now followed! I shudder when I think of it!—Methinks, I still hear the cries of grief, fury, and madness; the howlings of imprecation.—At these words, my father put his hands to his eyes and ears.—O the women! the women, (said he) I can this moment see them.—Some rolled themselves upon the earth, plucked the hair from their head, and tore their cheeks and breasts; others foamed at the mouth, and grasping their helpless infants by their legs, would have dashed out their brains against the ground, had they not been prevented. Of the men, some broke, destroyed, and scattered about them whatever came in their way, and threatened to set fire to the house. Others roared and dug up the earth with their nails, as if they were searching for the minister's body, to tear it to pieces. In the midst of all this uproar, you might hear the shrill cries of the children, who, without knowing why, shared the despair of their parents, running up to them, and laying hold of
their

their clothes, from whence they were inhumanly thrust away. I don't recollect, ever in my life, suffering what I then did,

Meanwhile I had written to the Fremins, giving them an account of the whole affair, and intreating them to make haste and come, as thereby a catastrophe might be averted, which else it would not be in my power to prevent.

I had prevailed upon the poor unfortunate people to be a little more quiet, by giving them hopes (with which I really flattered myself) that I might prevail upon the heir to give up his right, or at least bring him to a favourable declaration. And upon that, I had sent them into the most distant cottages of the village.

Fremin arrived from Paris : I looked stedfastly at him ; his countenance was fierce, and promised nothing very favourable.

Diderot, the Son.

Had he not large, black, and thick eyebrows ; small hollow eyes ; a broad, somewhat wry mouth ; a colour between black and brown ;
and

and was he not pitted with the small-pox, like a very sieve?

Father.

Just so. He had travelled above an hundred miles in no more than 30 hours. I began with pointing out to him the poor people, whose cause I was to plead. They all stood bolt upright before him in silent confusion; the women in tears; the men leaning upon their sticks, with their hands in their caps. Fremin sat with his eyes closed; his head bent forwards; his chin resting upon his breast; and never deigned to look at them. I spoke in their favour with all the force of which I was master. Indeed, it is amazing how we come by the expressions we employ upon such occasions. I made it plain to him, how uncertain it was whether or not he was legally entitled to the inheritance; I conjured him, by his affluence, by the misery to which he was now witness; nay, I verily believe, I threw myself at his feet; but not a farthing could I squeeze out of him. His answer was, that he could not enter upon such-like considerations; there was a will; he was indifferent as to its validity; and would rather be directed by my actions than my words.

Full

Full of indignation, I threw down the keys before him ; he snatched them up, and took possession of the whole estate. When I came home. I was in such a trepidation, so jaded and so altered, your mother, who was then still alive, conceived some great mischance had befallen me.—O, my children, what a fellow that Fremin was !

This narrative was followed by a deep silence. While every one was considering so extraordinary an occurrence in his own way, some visitors came in. There was a clergyman, whose name I have forgot ; a corpulent prior, who knew more about good wine than good works, and had oftener thumbed over the *Moyen de parvenir*, than the *Conferences de Grenoble* ; a lawyer, named Dubois, notary and lieutenant of the police ; and soon after a mechanic, who wished to speak with my father. He was admitted, and with him an old engineer of Provence, who lived a retired life, immersed in the study of the mathematics, of which he had formerly been teacher. He was a neighbour of the mechanic, who was himself a hatter.

The first word which the hatter uttered, was to hint to my father, that the company was rather

ther too numerous for the business upon which he was come. Every one rose from his seat; the Prior, the Notary, the Geometer, and I, were desired by the Hatter to stay.

Mr Diderot (says he to my father, after looking about in the room, to see whether there was any body else within hearing) it is your integrity and penetration that have brought me hither. And I have no objection to find these other gentlemen present, who may perhaps not know me, though I know every one of them. A priest, a lawyer, a man of letters, a philosopher, and a man of virtue! It would be very strange, if among men of such different pursuits, all equally possessed of just principles and enlightened minds, I could not meet with the advice I want. But before I begin, added the Hatter, you must promise to keep the matter a secret, whatever I may resolve upon. It was promised him, and he went on as follows :

I have no children. I had none by my late wife, whom I lost about a fortnight ago. Ever since I can hardly be said to live. I can neither eat nor drink, sleep nor work. I rise, I dress, I go out, and loiter about town, a prey to grief.

K

I

I nursed my wife all the eighteen months of her illness; I served her in every way I could with whatever her lamentable case required. My expences on her account exceeded the amount of our narrow income, and of my wages, and involved me in debt. And now she is gone, and I am worn out with care and toil; all the fruit of my youthful exertions would be lost to me: In a word, I should be just where I was the first day of our house-keeping, were I to follow the laws, were I to suffer that part of my wife's portion, which at my wife's death goes from us, to be given to distant relations from a collateral branch. This portion consisted of a handsome estate; (for her parents, who were very fond of their daughter, did for her to the utmost of their power, or rather beyond it) of a quantity of fine and well-conditioned linen, which is still as good as new, for the poor woman had no time to make use of it; and of 20,000 livres in ready money, paid by virtue of a draft upon Mr Michelin, lieutenant to the procurator-general. My late wife had no sooner closed her eyes, than I secreted the money and linen. And now, gentlemen, you have the whole of it. Was I right in doing so? or was I wrong? My conscience is not at ease. Methinks, I am constantly hearing a somewhat,
which

which says, You have stolen it ; you have stolen it ; make restitution ; make restitution ! What is your opinion of the matter ? Consider, gentlemen, my wife, at her decease, took with her all my earnings for twenty years back ; consider that I am now incapable of work ; that I am in debt ; and that, if I restore what I have secreted, all I have left, is to day or to-morrow to go to the alms-house. Speak out, gentlemen ! I wait for your decision : Am I to restore it, and to go to the alms-house ?

Honour to whom honour is due, said my father, bowing to the clergyman, you come first, Mr Prior !

Son, says the Prior to the Hatter, I am not fond of entertaining scruples ; perhaps you ought not to have taken the money ; but as you have, I am of opinion, that you will do best to keep it.

Father.

Mr Prior, I hope you have not done yet ?

Prior.

Indeed I have ; upon my soul, I have not a syllable more to say.

Father.

Father.

Then you have not penetrated very deep.—
Now is your turn, Mr Counsellor !

Counf.

Yours is a disagreeable situation, my friend !
Another might perhaps advise you, to secure the
principal to your wife's relations so as to pre-
vent its going to yours, at your death ; and to
spend the interest during your life. But there
are laws ; and by these laws you are as little
entitled to the interest as to the full possession of
the principal. Take my advice ; do justice to
the laws, and be an honest man, if it must be,
even in the alms-house.

Diderot, the Son.

Laws—there are laws, did you say ? fine
laws truly, I dare swear.

Father.

Well, Mr Mathematician, and how will you
solve the problem ?

Geom.

Geom.

Did you not say, my friend, that what you took was about 20,000 livres ?

Hatter.

I did, Sir.

Geom.

And what might your wife's illness have cost you ?

Hatter.

Much about the same sum.

Geom.

Well then, 20,000 livres paid with 20,000 livres leaves the balance even.

Father.

(*To me.*) And what says philosophy ?

Diderot, the Son.

When laws want common sense, philosophy must hold her peace.

My

My father, perceiving I was not to be urged any farther, turned to the Hatter : And, Mr N. (says he) you confess, that you have not been easy, since you took possession of your wife's effects ; pray, of what use can the money be to you, after depriving you of the greatest of all possessions ? Make haste, and rid yourself of it ; eat and drink ; sleep, work, and be content and happy in yourself.

Not I, Sir, (answered the Hatter with a look of defiance) I will go to Geneva.

And so you mean to leave your remorse of conscience behind you, do you ?—Go wherever you will, you will always carry your conscience with you.

The Hatter went away ; and now the conversation turned upon the strangeness of his answer. It was universally agreed, that sensations of all kinds might perhaps be weakened by distance of time and place. The company left us ; my brother and sister returned, and we resumed the conversation that had been interrupted.

God

God be praised (said my father) we are now got together again: When I am with other people, I am happy, but much more so when with you. Then turning to me; and why (says he) did not you give the Hatter your opinion?

Diderot, the Son.

You hindered me.

Father.

And was I in the wrong?

Diderot, the Son.

No: It is impossible to give good advice to a fool.—Pray now, is not the man his wife's nearest relation? and was not the money he has kept back given him as his wife's portion? Has he not the most undoubted title to it? And what right have these collateral relations to it?

Father.

You only look at the law, not discerning the spirit of the law.

Diderot, the Son.

I know as well as you, father, that wives would be very ill secured against the contempt
and

and hatred of their husbands, if death should put these last in possession of the others fortunes. But what is that to me, provided that I am an honest man, and have faithfully performed what was my duty to my wife? Is it not misfortune enough to lose her? And must I be plundered into the bargain?

Father.

If you allow the wisdom of the law, I think, you ought to follow it.

Sister.

Remove the law, and there is no such thing as theft.

Diderot, the Son.

You mistake, sister.

Brother.

If there were no law, there would be an end of property, we should have all things in common.

Diderot, the Son.

You are mistaken, brother.

Brother.

Brother.

What then is the foundation of property ?

Diderot, the Son.

It depends originally upon a man's taking possession of what was common, by his own labour. Good laws were made by nature from all eternity. Legal power has only to see them put in execution. Against the wicked such power exerts itself, but has nothing to do with the good. Now, I being a good man, in this and many other cases which I could name, always summon the civil powers before the bar of my heart, of my judgment, of my conscience ; before the bar of natural equity. And according to the answer I get there, upon my inquiry, I submit myself to such power, or disavow it.

Father.

Preach these doctrines upon the house-tops ! you will make your fortune, I assure you ; and we shall see fine consequences ensue.

Diderot, the Son.

I never meant to preach such doctrines ; these are truths not calculated for fools : No ; I mean to keep them to myself.

L

Father.

Father.

Keep them to yourself? and you call yourself a philosopher!

Diderot, the Son.

To be sure, I do!

Father.

At this rate, I can easily conceive, that you did not warmly approve of my conduct in the affair of Thivet. What do you think of it, Abbé?

Abbé.

O father, I think you acted very wisely, both in consulting and in following Father Bouin; and if you had hearkened to your first inclination, we had indeed been ruined.

Father.

And you, mighty philosopher, are not of that opinion?

Diderot, the Son.

No.

Father.

Very short. But go on.

Diderot,

Diderot, the Son.

Do you command me to do so?

Father.

I do.

Diderot, the Son.

And to do it without reserve?

Father.

Yes.

No indeed (returned I with warmth); I am not of that opinion. Nay, I can't help thinking, if you ever did a bad action in your life, you did it then. And instead of believing with you, that had you destroyed the will, you must have made good the sum to the Fremins, I believe, you ought to give satisfaction to the poor heirs for not having destroyed it.

Father.

Well, I must freely own, it has lain heavy upon my mind ever since. But then Father Bouin—

Diderot, the Son.

This Father Bouin of yours, in spite of his great fame for learning and sanctity, was no
more

more than an empty prater, a hypocrite of contracted views.

Sister.

(*In a low voice.*) I hope you do not intend to deprive us of all we are worth.

Father.

Softly, softly, drop the Father, and let us hear your arguments, without falling foul upon any man.

Diderot, the Son.

As for my arguments, they are very simple, and you shall hear them. Either the testator meant to suppress a deed, drawn up in a fit of hard-heartedness; a supposition which every circumstance confirms; and in that case, you have made his repentance of no effect; or he intended the cruel writing to stand, and you have made yourself a partaker in his iniquity.

Father.

In his iniquity? it is easy to say so.

Diderot, the Son.

Yes, yes, his iniquity! For, as to Father Bonin's babble, it is all nothing but unmeaning subtlety,

fabtlety, empty conjecture, ill founded supposition; compared with the circumstances which tended to destroy every trace of validity in a deed, which you have drawn forth from oblivion, and in fact rendered valid. A trunk full of uselels scraps; among these uselels scraps, an old writing, clearly intended to be cancelled, as appears from its date, its injustice, its lying mixed with other uselels lumber, the death of the executors, the contempt shewn to Fremins letters, their opulence, and the poverty of the true heirs! And what is opposed to all this? An imaginary restitution. As if there was any probability that this poor devil of a priest, who, when he entered upon his living, was not worth a groat; who spent eighty years of his life, in heaping shilling upon shilling, and at last scraped together about 100,000 livres, who never lived with the Fremins, and perhaps never knew them but by name—as if, I say, there was any probability of his having stolen 100,000 livres from the book-sellers. But suppose even the theft had been committed, what great harm was there in—well, it signifies nothing, I, in your place, would have burned it. And I maintain it, you ought to have done so too; you ought to have attended to your own heart, a heart that ever since

has

has not ceased to exclaim against your proceeding; a heart that could have given you much better advice, than that same pitiful Father Bouin; whose decision only serves to prove, what a formidable authority religious prejudices exert, even in the best of heads; and what a baneful influence unjust laws and false principles have upon sound sense and natural equity.

My sister was silent, but pressed my hand as a mark of her approbation. The Abbé shook his head.

And now, a little more ill language against Father Bouin, said my father. You must allow at least that my religion acquits me?

Diderot, the Son.

I allow it, but it reflects no honour upon that religion.

Father.

You must allow too, that the deed, which you take upon you to destroy, would have stood in law?

Diderot,

Diderot, the Son.

Perhaps it might, to the shame of the laws.

Father.

You allow too, that all those circumstances, which you represent as so conclusive, would not have been regarded before a magistrate?

Diderot, the Son.

I am not so sure of that; I would at least have fought to keep my own heart clear; and in that view, would have ventured a 50 duploons or so, and have attacked the will in the name of the poor heirs. Methinks, that would have been a well directed piece of charity.

Father.

Why truly, as to that matter, had you been with me, and given me your advice to that effect, though, to be sure, when a man is beginning to keep house, 50 duploons is no contemptible sum) still, I verily believe, I should have taken it.

Abbé.

Abbé.

For my part, I should rather have chosen to give the money to the poor heirs than to the lawyers.

Diderot, the Son.

And do you really think, brother, we should have lost?

Abbé.

I have not a doubt of it. Judges adhere to the law, as my father and Father Bouin have done, and they do well. Judges, in such cases, shut their eyes upon circumstances, just as my father and Father Bouin have done, for fear of the consequences that might follow a contrary procedure; and they do well. They give up sometimes, even against their conviction, the cause of unfortunate innocence, when this could not be maintained, without giving encouragement to a number of sharpers; my father and Father Bouin did so in this case; and they are certainly in the right. Like my father and Father Bouin, they take care not to give a decision, which, though in one particular case, it might be equitable, would yet open a door to innumerable disorders,

disorders, and so become hurtful ; and surely their conduct is laudable. And now, as to the case in question about the will.

Father.

(*To me.*) Your arguments may do very well for a private person, but they by no means suit a judge. Many an unconscientious counsellor might have said to me in private, O, do you burn the will : But he would never have ventured to give it as his opinion in writing.

Diderot, the Son.

Well, I see so much ; the matter was not fit to be brought before judges ; and, as I live, it never should have been brought before them, had I been in your place.

Father.

And so you would have followed your own judgment, in preference to that of the public ; your own decision, in preference to the decision of the judge ?

Diderot, the Son.

Doubtless I would. Ought not the man to take place of the judge ? Is not the sense of the
M whole

whole human race more sacred than that of the legislature? We call ourselves civilized, and are worse than the savages. We seem doomed to wander for centuries together from one extreme, from one error to the other, in order, forsooth, to arrive at that to which the first spark of common sense, nay instinct itself, would have instantly led us. We are got into such a labyrinth—

Father.

My son, my son, common sense is indeed an excellent pillow; but still I find my head rest easier upon that of religion and the laws—and now, not a word more; I have no occasion for sleepless nights! But, methinks, you grow warm. Well then tell me, suppose I had burnt the will, would you have hindered me from making restitution?

Diderot, the Son.

Not I, father, I have more regard for your quiet, than for all the wealth in the world.

Father.

I like your answer, for this reason.

Diderot,

Diderot, the Son.

Well, pray tell me your reason.

Father.

Your uncle, Pigneron the canon, was a rough kind of man ; and as he used frequently in his conversation to satyrize his brethren of the cloth, he was not well liked among them. You was nominated his successor. But a short time before his death, it was judged proper by the family to send his deed of resignation to Rome, instead of giving it into the hands of the Chapter, as they might perhaps have refused to ratify it. The courier was dispatched ; but your uncle dying an hour or two before the time when it was probable the courier would arrive, the canon's place, and with it 1800 livres was lost. Your mother, your aunts, our relations and friends, were for concealing the canon's death. I rejected their advice, and immediately set the bells a-ringing.

Diderot, the Son.

You did very right.

Father.

Father.

Suppose I had hearkened to these well-meaning women, and afterwards felt remorse of conscience, I am confident you would not have hesitated to deliver up your gown.

Diderot, the Son.

As it is, I had rather be a good philosopher, or nothing at all, than a bad canon.

Just at these words, the jolly prior entered, and hearing the conclusion of what I had said, A bad canon? says he, I should like to know, how a man can be either a good or a bad prior, either a good or a bad canon! These are both stations that have so little to do with a person's moral character.

The cloth was now laid; they continued to dispute with me, jokes were passed upon the prior about his decision in the latter's business, and the indifferent tone of voice in which he spoke of priors and canons, and, at last, the affair with the will was stated to him. Instead, however, of entering into any discussion of the subject,

subject, he told us a story, in which he was personally concerned.

Prior.

You recollect no doubt the enormous failure of Bourmont the banker ?

Father.

I have reason to recollect it, I had a concern in it too.

Prior.

So much the better,

Father.

Why so ?

Prior.

It will help to ease my conscience, if I have erred. I was appointed trustee for the creditors. Among the debts owing to Bourmont, we found a note of hand of a corn-dealer, a neighbour of his. This note, when divided among the creditors in due proportion, came to about twelve shillings a-piece ; and if the corn-dealer had been forced to pay it, it would have ruined him. I thought—

Father.

Father.

None of the creditors would have refused the poor fellow his twelve shillings.—Then I suppose you cancelled the note ; and gave alms out of my purse ?

Prior.

I did so. Do you take it amiss ?

Father.

Not I.

Prior.

Then, pray, only do me the favour to believe, that the rest of the creditors would have taken it as little amiss as you do ; and the whole affair is settled.

Father.

But, Mr Prior, if you take upon you to cancel one note, what should prevent your doing the same by two, three, four, or as many notes as there are necessitous persons, whom you wish to relieve ? This rule of compassion might, I doubt, lead us too far, Mr Prior—justice, justice !—

Prior.

Prior.

— is often the greatest injustice.

Just then a young woman that lived upon the first floor came down. She was gaiety and vivacity itself. My father inquired of her, whether she had heard from her husband. This husband of hers had set her an example of bad morals; and I am afraid she had, in some instances, taken the liberty of following it. He was then gone to Martinico to escape from his creditors.

Mrs Iffigni (for that was our lodger's name) answered my father's question.—Mr Iffigni? Thank God, I have never heard a syllable of him; ten to one but he is drowned.

Prior.

Is he drowned? Well, I wish you joy of it.

Mrs Iff.

What concern is that of yours, Prior?

Prior.

Prior.

None at all ; but of yours it is ; is it not ?

Mrs Iff.

What need I concern myself about it ?

Prior.

Why—folks say—

Mrs Iff.

Say, what do they say ?

Prior.

Well, if you must know it, they say he has intercepted some of your letters.

Mrs Iff.

And have I not a fine collection of his ?

A very laughable dispute now arose between the Prior and Mrs Iffigni about the respective rights of the two sexes. Mrs Iffigni called upon me to assist her : And I was just about to prove to the Prior, that whoever of the two parties first broke the matrimonial contract, did by that means set the

the other at liberty ;—when my father calling for his night-cap, interrupted the conversation, and sent us to bed. When it came to my turn to bid him good night, he embraced me, and whispered in my ear, *I should have no objection to see two or three such citizens as you in a town ; but, if all were of your way of thinking, I should not choose to be an inhabitant.*

END OF THE CONVERSATION.

N

THE
SET OF HORSES,

A
COMEDY,
in Two Acts
FROM THE GERMAN. *of*
Emdorff.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Men.

BARON FORSTHEIM.

COUNT REITBAHN.

COUNT DE NARCISSE.

MAJOR REINBERG.

CAPTAIN EDELSEE.

BERTRAND, Maitre d'Hotel to the Baron.

NOTARY.

SERVANTS, HUNTSMEN, &c.

Women.

BARONESS FORSTHEIM.

ELEONORA, her Daughter.

LISETTE, a Waiting Maid.

Scene in the Baron's Castle, in the Archbishopric of
Saltzburgh, a District of Bavaria.

THE
SET OF HORSES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Bertrand, Lifette.

Bertrand.

YOU can't tell me then on what business my
Lady sent for me in such haste.

Lifette.

My Lady, like all wise people, is very secret ;
and it were difficult to guess it without her tell-
ing ; indeed she has so many things in her head,
so many deep projects as she calls them, that she
seldom knows herself what she is doing, or what
she means to do. I wish this great day were well
over with us.

Bertrand.

Bertrand.

Nobody has more reason to join in that wish than I have, whose office of maitre d'hotel *ad interim*, as our friend the Notary calls it, will be a very troublesome charge. I have now been sent for a dozen times by the Baroness, and eight of them was on the great subject of the stable.

Lifette.

That I can account for; you were not present at the first visit the Count Reitbahn paid to his bride Miss Eleonora.

Bertrand.

No; I was that day in my capacity of gardener, and look'd after the Baron's vine-house.

Lifette.

You must know then that this lover of ours is the greatest lover of horses of any man in Germany. The whole business of his life is to ride, drive a carriage, and try to break his own neck and the necks of other people. So the Baroness, with whom this is a favourite match, is resolved it shan't break off for want of attention on our part to the stable.

Bertrand.

Bertrand.

I guessed there was something important on that score. I have been obliged to fill every stall, though by pressing into our service the farm horses, my own two greys, and the parson's black mare. The schoolmaster's poney came too late for a place ; but the Baroness had secur'd him also, had there been occasion.

Lifette.

But why not the Major's pyebalds? they would have graced it somewhat more.

Bertrand.

Somewhat too much for a comparison with ours. But in their place we have graced it with some pieces of furniture you would hardly conjecture. You remember the old pictures of the Baron's ancestors, covered with mail from top to toe, with the family arms in every piece, either on the front of their helmets, or slyly stolen in between the large curls of their flaxen wigs.

Lifette.

Yes, yes, I have seen them in the lumber garret, when I have assisted my Lady on her annual scrubbing day.

Bertrand.

Bertrand.

They did hang there ; but they are promoted down stairs, and now adorn the walls of the stables.

Lifette.

The stable! the white-wig'd, black-mailed old warriors in the stable!—You should have remonstrated against so absurd a change ; every body will laugh at it.

Bertrand.

Remonstrated ; no, no ; I tried that once, and had nearly lost my place by it. Our Baroness is as infallible as his Holiness ; the Baron himself can only present a petition. You may venture more with her than any body. Try, if you choose, to *unstable* our ancestors.

Lifette.

My province does not extend to the stable. As to the plaiting of a ribbon, or the adjusting a ruffle, I can pretend something ; the Baroness knows I served three weeks at court, the longest time my late Lady the Marchioness ever kept a servant ; and so I must know the fashions. She
consulted

consulted me to-day on her daughter's wedding dress; but at last, like most people who ask advice in wedding-matters, heard my opinion, and followed her own.

Bertrand.

The Baron seems to me no more than passive at this marriage of our young Lady, and to have no great affection for his intended son-in-law.

Lisette.

No affection earthly, nor, I'm afraid, has his daughter; but the Count is rich, and so a good father, and a good daughter could have no objection. As to the Baron, indeed, he is so much of a sportsman, that, if he can match his greyhounds to his mind, he will willingly leave his daughter to her mother's.

Bertrand.

But is Miss Eleonora herself as indifferent about the matter?

Lisette.

She is too gentle to dispute it with her mother; though, I believe, had the Major arrived here a little sooner, she might not have been quite so
O yielding.

yielding. Before she knew him, she had only indifference for her husband to conquer. I suspect she has now some little affection for her lover to get the better of.

Bertrand.

Why, the Major seems a favourite with her father too.

Lifette.

At present very much so, since he discovered what a talent he had at finding a hare. The Major courses with him constantly.

Bertrand.

The Baron is rich enough to marry his daughter to a man of worth without fortune.

Lifette.

No man is rich enough for that now a days. But in truth he leaves such little matters to his wife, and thinks only of his hares and his pheasants. Even this day, when the Count is hourly expected to sign his contract with Eleonora, her father is courting till mid-day, and will come home just time enough to talk of the last chace while he is putting his hand to the marriage settlements.

lements. The poor Major must be a witness to them. I pity him from my soul.

Bertrand.

Every body pities and loves him. His father was the Baron's early friend, and, when he fell in battle, left his son to inherit his virtues and his valour.

Lifette.

But he has no other inheritance, and therefore the Baronefs—But hush—(*speaking louder*) our most noble Lady is coming.

Enter the Baronefs led by Captain Edelfee.

Baronefs.

With your permission, (*to the Captain*) Sir, I have but two words for my Maitre d'Hotel.—Be so kind as to take one turn in the garden, and I will join you.

Edelfee.

I am going to look for the Baron; I promised to meet him at his return from courting;—he would take this as a compliment, if he knew the unspeakable value I put on your company. (*Kisses her hand, and exit.*)

Baronefs.

Baroness.

The Captain is infinitely well bred.—Is he not, Lifette?

Lifette.

Extremely so, my lady—quite the court air about him.

Baroness.

How different from the Major!—Infinitely more discernment of character.—But where is Eleonora? Call her hither, I wish to examine her dress again for the last time. (*Lifette goes out.*)—My dear Bertrand, what anxiety I am in, when every thing is so arranged, so perfectly well arranged, I flatter myself; it is now two o'clock, and Count Reitbahn is not arrived.

Bertrand.

People in town, my Lady, rise late, and he has a pretty long journey to make.

Baroness.

But I have a note from my sister, that he left town this morning about six o'clock.

Bertrand.

Bertrand.

He should have been here then several hours ago. I understand the Count generally drives hard ; his horses are excellent.

Baroness.

I am terribly afraid some accident has happened to him ; and not only to him, but to his companion. He brings with him a friend of the highest eminence and fashion ; of such eminence and fashion, that I should be afraid to receive him, had I not a perfect confidence in the wisdom of my measures, and the fidelity of your execution of them.

Bertrand.

With your Ladyship's taste and knowledge one might receive an Emperor.

Baroness.

Yes, I believe he will find things in a stile of excellence.

Bertrand.

With your Ladyship's gracious permission, may I ask the name of this noble guest ?

Baroness.

Baroness.

He is a gentleman, who, during the four weeks he has been returned from Paris, has made some noise among the *beau monde*.—He gives the *ton* in every thing.—Such talents, such accomplishments! He has invented a new button for the men, and had the chief hand in the last elegant head-dress for the ladies.—Besides, he is such a literary character. He has written two delightful *charades*, and filled up the *Bouts rimez* in the last *Mercure Galant*.

Bertrand.

He must be an incomparable fine gentleman. Will your Ladyship have the condescension to tell me his name?

Baroness.

The Count de Narcisse.

Bertrand.

I have had the honour to hear him frequently mentioned. His father left him a very large fortune.

Baroness.

Paris has ruined him a little; but then it has made him so charming a man—given him so exquisite

quisite a taste.—You have taken care, I hope, that the ragouts are seasoned to a scruple.—Then as to the establishment—are there not two laced liveries that don't wait at present ?

Bertrand.

Yes, my Lady.

Baroness.

I would not have them unemployed ; so put them on the gardener's two lads, and let them wait at table.

Bertrand.

Your Ladyship's idea is admirable ; it shall be immediately put in execution.

Baroness.

Thomas, the Baron is a sportsman ; the stable boys may wait as *piqueurs*.

Bertrand.

The suggestion is worthy of your Ladyship. Yet, I'm afraid, there is a small objection ; they will smell of the stable.

Baroness.

Oh ! we shall burn frankincense during dinner.

Bertrand.

Bertrand.

Your Ladyship is so ingenious.

Baronefs.

But we must perfume the stable too on account of my son-in-law.—I shall send you a bunch of lavender for the purpose. So much for two of the senses ; but there is a third that I wish also to provide for. We must have music while we sit at table.

Bertrand.

Music, my Lady.

Baronefs.

Yes, music ; that will be something peculiarly my own taste.

Bertrand.

If we could find musicians.

Baronefs.

They must be all my own people ; no hired performers. There was an excellent tabor pipe at the last fair in the village ; these with the blind fidler and the lame bass that played at the gardener's wedding.

Bertrand.

Bertrand.

Your Ladyship has such resources,—they shall be ordered immediately.—They play'd the minuet de la cour incomparably, only they could not quite master the gavot.

Baronefs.

The gavot is vulgar, and must be left out ;— let them put in its place one of their best jigs ;— they play'd a jig so admirably, that I had almost forgot my dignity, and danced to it myself.— The schoolmaster too sings an excellent song,— let him be summoned.

Bertrand.

The concert will be incomparable, my Lady.

Baronefs.

The occasion calls for something superb;—I trust to your diligence. (*Exit Bertrand.*)

Enter Eleonora and Lisette.

Baroness.

Come hither, Eleonora, and let me examine your figure; why, well, this is well;—had I not
P interfered.

interfered, what a tawdry thing you would have made of yourself.—But still, methinks, your sleeves are hardly wide enough.

Lifette.

Indeed, my Lady, it was impossible to have them larger.

Baroness.

They wear them, I am told, exceedingly large at court; and the Count de Narcisse's eye is so accustomed to the dress of the court—your head—I think it is impossible he can find any thing wanting there.

Lifette.

No, my Lady; there is such a profusion of ornament; the spring with all its flowers.

Baroness.

But, methinks, the neck is a little too bare.

Lifette.

Oh! Madam, for so pretty a neck! besides they have of late brought up bare necks at court again.

Baroness.

Baronefs.

Be it so then ; but place the necklace a little higher.

Eleonora.

You will be so kind as give me leave ; I could not bear it higher indeed.

Baronefs.

Hold your tongue, child ; have you a nicer eye than me ? Are your shoes as elegant as they ought to be ?

Eleonora.

As to their elegance, I can't say ; but they pinch me horribly.

Baronefs.

Too tight ! impossible ; your foot cannot be larger, I am sure ; you must take small feet of me.

Lifette.

My young Lady may wear slippers ; slippers are quite the fashion at court.

Baronefs.

Slippers in high dress—I did not know that. It is now two years since I was at court.

Lifette.

Lifette.

The fashion of slippers, my Lady, has only been in these two months.

Baroness.

Go then, child, and get slippers put on immediately.—Lifette, do you remain—I have business with you. (*Exit Eleonora.*)

Baroness.

Tell me, Lifette, what gives my daughter that melancholy air.—On this day, methinks, she should be gay.

Lifette.

I don't pretend, my Lady, to be in the confidence of Miss Eleonora ; but yet I have conjectures.—This day, perhaps, is the very reason of her sadness.

Baroness.

Her marriage ! it cannot be her marriage ; a marriage of my making.—I spoke to her about it, on my first idea of the thing, three months ago, and I found her perfectly submissive to my better judgment.

Lifette.

Lisette.

But in three months, my Lady, perhaps she has got a better judgment of her own.

Baronefs.

How?

Lisette.

Three months is a long time; there are I don't know how many hours in three months,—and a young lady's heart may suffer a great many changes in that time.

Baronefs.

Changes! what could cause any change in my daughter's heart. She has seen nobody except the few officers that are quartered in the neighbourhood,—and as to them—the Captain is indeed a very engaging man; but his taste is for something more accomplished, more formed, more perfect, than a girl of her age can pretend to be. (*Walking backwards and forwards, and looking at herself in the glass.*) There is nobody else except that fool of a Major, who courses with the Baron.—It is impossible she should have taken a fancy to him.

Lisette.

Lifette.

Impossible, my Lady.—Why now I think the Major one of the most agreeable men in the world—so fine a leg!—so graceful a walk!

Baroness.

A leg and a walk forsooth—why so has his corporal.

Lifette.

But then, my Lady, his courage, his probity, his honour is so highly talked of; and withal so gentle; all the country people round adore him.

Baroness.

Country people indeed!—who but such fools talk of character in a husband—does any body talk of his rank, his fortune—the settlement he could make, the jointure he could afford.

Lifette.

But at eighteen, my Lady, and with a lover of five and twenty, young ladies don't think of jointures.

Baroness.

Baroness.

It is fortunate then when they have wiser people to think for them.—Here comes my daughter ; I must go to the bottom of this.

Enter Eleonora.

Eleonora, let me ask you one question, and answer me fairly.—What sort of reception do you intend to give the Count de Reitbahn to-day ?

Eleonora.

I shall receive him with that politeness and respect which is due to the man whom my honoured mamma has chosen for my husband.

Baroness.

Why, that is well, and dutifully said, my child ;—but are politeness and respect all you can afford him?—do you add no affection to the list of your feelings for him ?

Eleonora.

If he is to become my husband, I hope I shall not fail in the affection and duty of a wife,

Baroness.

Baroness.

Consider, child, what the Count is—a man of high family and great fortune. He will have a title to expect a very deep share of gratitude and warm affection.

Eleonora.

Some wives might have a very warm affection for his rank and fortune. To me they are not so attractive—but I trust I shall conduct myself as becomes your daughter—your daughter for whom you chose this husband. If I am less grateful for the gift than some other daughters might be, I am sorry for it;—but I know my duty, and hope I shall never fail to perform it.

Baroness.

Still duty and conduct,—these are cold words, child.—Did you never feel what love was.

Eleonora.

No, Mamma—at least not for—the Count has my esteem, my regard; I was contented to love my father and you.

Baroness.

And nobody else? positively nobody else?

Eleonora.

Eleonora.

You know, Mamma, I now must love nobody else.

Baroness.

But supposing I should give you leave to love somebody else.

Eleonora.

Give me leave—can you be so good?—could I hope for such indulgence? Surely the most worthy and amiable of men—

Baroness.

Who is so amiable and worthy?

Eleonora.

I thought you spoke of Major Rheinberg.

Baroness.

Major Rheinberg—would you be such a fool—such an idiot—a man with no fortune, and very little rank—is he a match for the daughter of the Baroness de Forstheim—go, I blush for you! But let me hear no more of it—thank heaven for having given you a mother, whose wisdom protects you from the effects of your

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own folly—the contract shall be signed this afternoon—and let not the name of Major Rheinberg ever pass from your lips—nor your's, Liffette; I am ashamed that a daughter of mine should have had a witness of such folly.

Eleonora.

Fear not, Mamma, my speaking of him.—If I am to be unhappy, I know how to be unhappy in silence.

Enter a Servant.

Servant.

My gracious Lady—in setting out the table, a question of some nicety has arisen.

Baroness.

Let me know it—I love new questions, they exercise ingenuity.

Servant.

We are at a loss whether to place *Neptune* or *Louis XIV.* in the centre.

Baroness.

One on each side, and the pagodas in the middle; or stay, the Baron is a hunter—so you may place

place the alabaster Diana and her hounds in the centre, with Neptune, Louis XIV. and the two pagodas around her.—But this is too important an arrangement to leave to others. I must make the dispositions myself.—Come, Eleonora ; no more of these sad looks—be gay and happy as you ought to be—as such a husband and such a mother should make you.

(Exeunt Baroness and Servant.)

Lifette.

Well, Miss Eleonora.

Eleonora.

Oh Lifette ! I am undone. Is it not hard to have been thus sacrificed to the caprice of others, before I knew myself.

Lifette.

You don't know or trust to yourself as you ought. Were I in your situation I would die before I would sign this odious contract. With such a husband to avoid, and such a lover to gain, who could blame you ?

Eleonora.

My own conscience, Lifette. I cannot use my parents thus ; their only child, the darling, as he often calls me, of the most indulgent of fathers.

Lifette.

Lisette.

I deny that ; he is only the most indulgent of husbands, otherwise he would not sacrifice to this fancy of the Baroness the happiness of his daughter.

Enter Captain Edelfee.

Captain.

At last, Miss Eleonora, I have found you alone.—I have the happiest tidings to tell you.

Eleonora.

And I the most unhappy.

Captain.

But mine are new, and you can't tell what turn things may take. You know that your father last night accompanied the Major and me more than half way home. You can't conceive half the kind things he said to the Major, nor how much he seems in the Baron's good graces.

Eleonora.

And whence arose all that kindness ?

Captain.

Captain.

I will tell you.—Yesterday the Major mentioned to the Baron that the greyhounds he imported from Hungary were arrived, and that, from the accounts of the gentleman who commissioned them, he believed them to be of the very best breed of that country;—your father, whose keeness as a sportsman you know, could scarcely wait for day-light to make trial of these inestimable creatures. He had heard of the fame of Hungary in that article, and told us a hundred stories of feats done by Hungarian greyhounds. But, when you shall see the Major's dogs run, said I—We appointed an early hour for that purpose—Having got into favour on this ground, I turned the conversation from coursing to matrimony, and then on your marriage in particular.—Your father did not hesitate to own that this match with the Count was none of his choosing, and that Rheitbahn was by no means a favourite with him.—I ventured to mention the Major's attachment.

Eleonora.

Oh heavens! how could you be so rash? what said my father?

Captain.

Captain.

Why, that the Major had a good taste in young ladies as well as greyhounds.

Eleonora.

'Tis cruel to joke thus with our misfortunes.

Captain.

I never was more serious. He asked me if you knew of his love for you.

Eleonora.

And what answer did you make ?

Captain.

The honest one, that you did, and was almost as fond of him as he was of you.

Eleonora.

My God! you could not be so foolish—to my father—what will become of me ?

Captain.

Don't be alarmed. The Baron smiled, and turning to the Major, said to him, Your father was an excellent man, and my particular friend.
Had

Had his son come hither a few weeks sooner—
nobody can tell what might have happened.

Eleonora.

Oh ! it is impossible he could be so indulgent ?
he could not have spoken thus.

Captain.

Upon the honour of a soldier he did speak
thus. The Major conjures you not to forget
him, nor to abandon that hope with which he still
continues to flatter himself.

Eleonora.

Alas ! I fear it is now too late ; does not the
Count come here to-day—where then is hope,
and on what can it be built ?

Captain.

On the Major's greyhounds. If they run, as
I hope they will, such a present will go far with
the Baron—at any rate do not despair. Believe
me I know my friend well ; a man so amiable
as Rheinberg is worth risking something for. I
am not flatterer enough to say what I think of
you.—It is impossible heaven can mean to dis-
appoint

appoint such a match for the sake of such a fool
as Rheithahn.

Lisette.

Have a care, the Baroness is at hand,

Captain.

Oh! then I must prepare a face of gallantry;
that is the most difficult part of my exertions in
your service,

* *Enter Baroness.*

Baroness.

I am lucky enough then, Captain, to find you
still here.

Captain.

I live still in hopes to have the honour of find-
ing you here,

Baroness.

To-day it is not easy to say where to find me;
I have so many things to do in a thousand dif-
ferent quarters.

Captain.

Certainly. The general of an army has not
more orders to give in a day of battle. One
must

must be endowed with your capacity (a gift that falls to the lot of few) to be able to attend to such a multiplicity of affairs.

Baronefs.

Oh! you flatter me—a little address joined to a good taste is all that is required. But what in the name of wonder can have become of the Baron? have you seen any thing of him?

Captain.

No.

Baronefs.

On this day his absence is very extraordinary.

Captain.

I don't so much wonder at his being late, if his sport happened to be good. But the Count and his friend from town should have been more punctual. It is now near two o'clock.

Lifette.

I hear the sound of a posting horn.

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Baronefs.

Baronefs.

It is affuredly the Count. Lifette, fee that our people receive them according to the difpofition I laid down.

Captain.

That horn was certainly a hunting one ; it is the Baron who has returned.

Baronefs.

No, no, my husband's horn never founds.—It is the Count and his friend.—Lifette, my work-bag. I would wifh not to feem in a fuf for their reception.

Captain.

(*Afide to Eleonora.*) Have courage ; we fhall certainly fucceed, if you keep up your fpirits.

Baronefs.

Captain, be fo good as fit down.—Eleonora, fit down on the fofa—fo, in an eafy pofture—you fee I am quite at my eafe. The Count de Narciffe muft not think that his arrival can difconcert us.—Now—Oh Lord ! it is only the Baron.

Enter

Enter the Baron, the Major, and two Huntsmen.

Baron.

Good day, my chuck, good day—you would begin to suppose that I should not return to dinner.

Baroness.

I had almost begun to fear it.

Baron.

It would not have been surprising if I had not ; never saw such sport in my life.

Baroness.

Had'st thou, my sweeting ?

Baron.

The Major will tell it.

Major.

We were very fortunate indeed.

Baron.

Twelve hares ! twelve ! and not a shot fired.

Baroness.

Baroness.

Not a shot.—The last hail, I suppose, killed them.

Baron.

The last hail!—you are a knowing sportsman I see, my dear!—the greyhounds, my greyhounds.—I believe I may now brag all Europe in greyhounds.

Baroness.

And whence had you these dogs, my dear?

Baron.

From the Major, my best friend in the world, The greyhounds are a present from him.

Baroness.

From the Major—him!

Baron.

Tell the Baroness, my dear Major, the pedigree of these dogs.

Major.

He is not worthy of the Baroness's

Baron.

Baron.

Trifle do you call it.—Six hares to each dog *solo*, and his pedigree, a trifle.—Elinor, thank the Major for me ; one of your best curtsies.

Eleonora.

(*Curtfying.*) I am always grateful for every thing that tends to the satisfaction of my dear papa. (*Curtfies again.*)

Baron.

Why, that's well, very well, my darling !—a good curtsy ; a good smile ; I love to see young women affable.

Baronefs.

She can be very affable when she pleases.

Major.

She is always so—the sweetness of her own temper, the instructions of so excellent a mother—

Baron.

Hola ho ! bring in the hares.

Baronefs.

Baroness.

My love! I expect our company every moment; and so many hares in the saloon would look very odd.

Baron.

Expect! why is not this son-in-law of yours yet arrived.

Baroness.

No, my dear, but I look for him and his friend Count de Narcisse every moment.

Baron.

The Count de Narcisse too, the fine effenc'd gentleman from Paris?—What the Devil brings him here at this time? Do Counts run in couples thus?

Baroness.

Oh! my dear, I see you don't know the Count de Narcisse. He is a gentleman of the first rank and fashion, a relation of the Count de Rheitbahn's. He brings him hither to witness his contract.

Baron.

Baron.

Oh ! very well : I am not very anxious about his pedigree.—The breed is not so much to my mind.—Ha ! there they are—

(The Huntsmen bring in the hares.)

Do, my love, look at these hares ; every one of them taken single handed ;—I would not give the Major's greyhounds for a dukedom.

Baroness.

You value them a little too high, methinks.

Major.

Oh ! infinitely.—I only prize them as they have enabled me to contribute to the Baron's amusement.

Baron.

Major, look here. This is she that *Sultan* turn'd close by the wood.

Major.

I think this other was she.

Baron.

No, no, I have a trick for that. Look at this nick in her ear. This he had there at the second

cond turn. He runs like lightening. Yet I think *Diana* will be fleeter than him.

Major.

They will both mend on a few days rest. They have not yet quite recovered their journey.

Baron.

Six hares solo! and to mend.—No, no, that's a little too much, my good Major. Here, my chuck, I make you a present of six of these hares; the other six I have destined for my sweet Nell here.

Baroness.

What should Eleonora make of six hares?

Baron.

Send them in presents to her friends;—besides they were taken by the Major's greyhounds.—You won't like them the worse for that, Nell, eh!—Captain, I believe you think so—the poor Major!—why didn't your dogs arrive some weeks sooner.

Major.

I gave orders for them immediately on coming hither. I am sorry they could not arrive till the season was so far advanced.

Baron.

Baron.

Advanced, ha ! ha !—almost over it ! faith ! ah !
Captain.

Baroness.

(*To the Captain.*) All this is very foolish, methinks.

Captain.

(*In a whisper.*) 'Tis a merry joke with the Major. I will tell it you at dinner.

Baroness.

(*To Eleonora who is speaking to the Major.*) Child, have you nothing to do ?—sit down with your work by me.

Baron.

Leave her, my sweet, for this day. When she is married, you know, she will be snubbed by her husband.—Lay these hares down here till I look at them once again. Certainly that Hungary is the finest country in the universe. Tom, you'll take care to have the pointers ready in the afternoon. I have not killed a pheasant these two days.

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Baroness.

Baronefs.

My darling, this afternoon I don't think you can poffibly leave us.

Baron.

And why not, my dear ? Do you think I could lofe fo fine an afternoon to entertain my sweet fon-in-law ? No, no, he knows my way of living, and every one to his mind is my maxim.

Baronefs.

But his friend the Count de Narciffe is a ftranger, and will expect our attention.

Enter Bertrand.

Bertrand.

The noble ftrangers, my Lady, are arrived.

Baronefs.

Elinor, make hafte to meet them as they alight from their carriage.

Eleonora.

If you defire it, Mamma—yet, methinks, if you please—

Baron.

Baron.

I have some doubts, my dear, if her meeting them would be quite consistent with what we call decorum.

Lisette.

(*Whispers to the Baronefs.*) It is not the custom at court.

Baronefs.

Very well, you may remain where you are.

Captain.

I am intimately acquainted with the Count de Rheitbahn ; allow me to receive them.

Baronefs.

Since you are so obliging, Sir. The Captain is one of the most agreeable men I ever knew.—But, my dear, won't you cause them remove the hares ?

Baron.

The hares ! Why, these courtiers are not afraid of hares, are they ?—yet if you choose it, my dear—but who is this crippling along with a plaster on his face ?

Baronefs.

Baronefs.

Good heavens ! it cannot be—yes, it certainly is the Count de Narcisse.

Enter the Count de Narcisse.

Narcisse.

Yes, Madam, it is the miserable Count de Narcisse, just expiring—just at the point of death !
oh !

Baronefs.

My God ! how you terrify me ! what can have happened to you ?

Narcisse.

Why !—ah !—be so kind as order me a *fautail*.

Baronefs.

Instantly ; but, in the mean time, have the goodness to repose on this sofa.

Narcisse.

So—so.—Now I can speak a little.—You are, I suppose, Madam, the Lady of the house.

Baronefs.

Baroness.

Who is enchanted, Sir, with the honour of seeing you here, were it not for the unfortunate,—

Narcisse.

And you, Sir, I presume are the Baron de Forstheim.

Baron.

Yes, Sir, at your service.

Narcisse.

I could have laid a thousand guineas you were the Baron, though I never had the honour of seeing you before.—Ah!—For heaven's sake let your surgeon come to me immediately.—Mine has broke his neck, and is left behind at a village on our way.

Baron.

Give orders for your surgeon, my dear.

Baroness.

Why, this is the most unlucky—the most unfortunate.—We must send instantly to the town for assistance.

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

To the town! My God! I shall die before your messenger gets half way. Have you really not a surgeon on your establishment?

Baron.

A surgeon!

Baroness.

Why, we are so healthy here in the country; nobody except myself has any delicacy of constitution; I am distressed beyond measure—absolutely in despair.

Major.

Allow me to send for the surgeon of our regiment; he will be here in a quarter of an hour.

Narcisse.

The Major, I suppose, is on service in the neighbourhood.

Baroness.

Yes, and the Captain too.—I hope you fit easily, Sir.

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

Why, in the country, these gentlemen will be very agreeable neighbours.—I think, Sir, we have met somewhere.

Captain.

I have had the honour of meeting the Count de Narcisse at the levee of the minister, and at court.

Narcisse.

I believe it may be so; I have some recollection of it.—Be so kind, Madam, as order them to fetch me a looking-glass;—my face must be miserably discomposed.—This young Lady is your daughter, I presume.—Your lover, Miss, was very near breaking my neck.

Baroness.

How! the Count de Reitbahn the cause of this terrible accident.

Narcisse.

Even so.—He took it into his head to drive my carriage, and showed his skill by overturning it.

Baron.

Baron.

Nothing more likely. He never shall drive me,

Baroness.

But what became of the Count himself?

Narcisse.

Oh! he only drove the carriage, and was perfectly unconcerned in the overturn.—He was so humane as to see me the length of your stable door; but there he left me to pay his respects to the horses.

Baroness.

Yes, he has an extravagant passion for horses. Oh! here is the mirror; give it to the Count.

(They give him the mirror.)

Narcisse.

(Looking in the mirror.) Good heavens! scarified, torn in pieces, *depoudré, abimé*. Eight days will not be enough to re-establish my complexion—will not give back its delicate tint to this left cheek.—See what a gash is here.

Baroness.

A horrible scratch indeed.

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

All the city will hear of this—Paris will speak of nothing else.

Baroness.

How grieved I am that the accident should have happened so near my house.

Narcisse.

So much the better for your house, Madam—it will derive some fame from the accident.—But, *à propos*, of your house—methinks it smells very oddly.—Ha ! these stinking hares ! Is that the usual furniture for a country saloon ?

Baron.

I killed these hares, Monsieur le Comte—killed them this morning with a leash of greyhounds from Hungary; they can't be stinking, let me tell you.—You are no hunter, I presume.

Narcisse.

No. I left off being a savage when I first went to France.—So you are really wise enough to get greyhounds from Hungary ?

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Baron.

Baron.

And sometimes a puppy from Paris.—Major, come this way with me.

(Exeunt the Baron and Major.)

Narcisse.

I am afraid my opinion of hunting has chased the Baron from the room.—The Baron, I presume, has never been at Paris.

Baroness.

Never ; but he has been at Salzburg.—His brother has an office at court there.—Lisette, make them take away these hares.

Narcisse.

At Salzburg, you say, Ma'am. *(Adjusting his hair by the looking-glass.)*

Baroness.

Yes, sometimes ; but of late I have been always so unfortunate as to be prevented from accompanying him.—The court, I am told, is very brilliant there.

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

The court!—Oh yes, very brilliant—What Hottentots they are! (*Aside.*)

Baroness.

Still very much pained, I see Count; very uneasy, I am afraid.—Would you allow me to get you a little balsam of my mother's composition?

Narcisse.

Excuse me, Madam—I never use any but of my own—but if you will allow me to lay myself along here. (*He puts his legs on the sofa.*)

Baroness.

Certainly, just as if you were at home.

Narcisse.

(*Leaning on his elbow, and looking through his glass.*) Why, the *pretendue* is really a very pretty girl.—But her dress—her dress—is the most elegant I have seen. May I presume, Miss, to ask who is your *femme de chambre*?

Baroness.

Baroness.

Lisette, you will be proud of this ;—she served two years at the court.

Narcisse.

Of Saltzburg no doubt.—And you, Baroness, are equally elegant as your daughter. There is an infinite deal of taste in that head dress.

Baroness.

As for me, Count, I always dress myself ; I trust that department to no one else.

Narcisse.

I could have guessed it from the manner in which it is executed.

Baroness.

Yes, though we live in the country, you will find, I hope, that some of us are not without intelligence in the elegancies of the court.

Narcisse.

I am persuaded of it—and therefore you will not be jealous of your daughter's good fortune in going thither.—You are very fortunate, Mademoiselle,

demoiselle, in this match—a man of great fortune ; but that is the least of his qualifications—of a noble family, of high fashion, of the first influence—in one word—a relation of mine.

Captain. (Aside to Eleonora.)

There's modesty for you.

Baroness.

I am not unacquainted with the high antiquity and distinguished honour of the Narcisse family.

Narcisse.

As for their antiquity—every body has heard of the great tournament at Worms in the fourteenth century ;—one of my ancestors was the most illustrious person there.

Captain.

I can bear witness to that ; and my reading farther informs me, that, at that same tournament, a Louis de Narcisse was twice unhorsed.

Narcisse.

You are correct in the fact, Captain ; but you must also know that in those days being unhorsed was a mark of victory.

Captain.

Captain.

If that old custom prevailed now, being *unchained* might be also a badge of honour.—These honourable tumbles seem to be the lot of your family.

Narcisse.

It is very true, I myself fell from my horse at a carousal in Paris; and the King laughed so immoderately, that all the world, that is, the few to whom I was not already known, were anxious to learn who I was; and, from that moment, no name was so much in the mouths of the court as mine.

Baroness.

Paris, I suppose, Count, is a place of unrivalled splendour and taste.

Narcisse.

Ah! Madam—do not awaken my regrets for leaving it—Every where else, I must still recollect—that there is but one Paris in the world.

Baroness.

So I have always heard—Paris and London—

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

London! Oh horrible! The very idea gives me the spleen.

Baroness.

How! is London so disagreeable a place?

Narcisse.

Disagreeable! shocking, insupportable! A people brutal and ignorant; who think one man as good as another, and value a Count of the Empire less than we do—a French cook.

Baroness.

I had no notion that an Englishman was so stupid an animal.

Narcisse.

Dull as a Dutchman, barbarous as a Swiss.

Baroness.

The Swiss, too, are they so barbarous?

Narcisse.

Still more so than the English. Once at Bern I happened to be crossing the great square, when the magistracy in a body were going from the church

church to the town-hall. I was in a vis-a-vis of Paris, brilliant and beautiful as the chariot of the sun.—The spot where I met those fine gentlemen was rather narrow; a fat little counsellor, instead of giving way, ordered my coachman to stop. I called out of my carriage, that I must absolutely pass.—You must wait, replied a loud peremptory voice. I lost patience, as you may believe, and told the fellow he did not know whom he stopped, and that I was the Count de Narcisse.—Why, my good little Count, said he, you have no right to interrupt the magistracy of Berne; yet I will venture to let you pass, if you will but tell me *why* you are a Count.—This question, I must own, disconcerted me, and I was forced to wait patiently till the whole greasy file of magistrates had gone by.

Baroness.

Why, I own, it was such as one could not tell how to answer.

Narcisse.

Why I was a Count?—who the Devil could tell why?

Captain.

Now I think the answer was easy enough.

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

And what, pray?

Captain.

I am a Count, because my father was one.

Baroness.

Why, to be sure, that might have done; I did not think of that answer.

Narcisse.

Oh! no answer would have done with such tramontane understandings.—For a gentleman and a man of fashion, I repeat it again—there is but one Paris in the world.

Enter the Count de Reitbahn, the Baron, and the Major.

Reitbahn.

Ha! my dear Mamma—(*Kisses her hand*) how is it with you? I see by your face that Narcisse has been complaining to you of his over-turn.

U

Baroness.

Baranetz.

It was very carelessly done of you, my dear Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

A large stone lay so unluckily in the way; I never drove so ill in my life; too much to the left by almost an inch.—My charming bride! beautiful as an angel! What eyes!

Eleonora.

Such as they are, you might have enjoyed the paradise of looking on them a full half hour sooner.

Reitbahn.

Pardon me, I was but a quarter of an hour in the stable; and I should have stood an hour, if I had not recollected that my sweet Elinor was not there.

Baron.

Was not in the stable; good!—Did you expect she should have been found in one of the vacant stalls?

Reitbahn.

Ah! had she been there, she would have been still more charming than she is. There was an empty

empty stall next the Dun Grop ; so well litter'd,
such excellent hay, and corn as clear as pearls.

Eleonora.

You have really imagined me an admirable
toilet.

Reitbahn.

I protest I think so.—But do you know, my
dear charmer, what kept me so long ?

Baroness.

The order in which you found things no
doubt. The portraits must have attracted your
regard.

Reitbahn.

The portraits !—it was a precious idea to hang
up those old grandfires in the stable.

Baron.

My ancestors in the stable ?

Baroness.

I will tell you all about it afterwards, my
love.—And so, Count, you were telling us what
detained you so long.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Why, the Major's pied horses that stand by themselves in the little stable on the right hand—I have not seen such a set—such shapes, and so beautifully marked, so much blood, with so much bone—Major, are they real Bohemians?

Major.

They are of that breed, Sir.

Reitbahn.

My mouth water'd at them, I confess.—Would you allow me, Major, to try them some day for a mile or two?

Major.

Whenever you please.

Reitbahn.

That's very obliging.—This afternoon if you will indulge me so far;—if their going answers their looks, there is not such a set in Germany.

Baron.

If the Major's horses are but half as good as his dogs.—He made me a present of a couple,
which

which arrived but yesterday, and killed each this morning six hares solo.

Reitbahn.

A propos, Madam, and you my charming bride, do you know what a terrible misfortune happened the last time I left you? That charming creature, my Hungarian, the best hunter I had—I can hardly yet bear to tell it—

Baroness.

What happened to him?

Reitbahn.

Dead—absolutely dead!—I pressed him a little too hard after leaving you—he grew ill that very night, and next morning, in spite of every assistance—he died—left his disconsolate master—I was three days without rest or food—without seeing any body but my groom—I have not indeed recovered it yet.—You were the cause of this, Eleonora. You see what my love will make me endure for your sake.

Eleonora.

By your making such speed to get away from me.—I pity the poor horse.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Ah! had you known him as I did,—the cleverest horse at a leap I ever saw—nothing like him, even in England.

Baroness.

Don't talk of England, my son.—The Count de Narcisse has given us such horrible accounts of London.

Reitbahn.

Narcisse knows nothing of the matter. He only saw the men and women—that's no way of judging of a country. I have rode eight or nine horses a day; there I have gained 500 or 1000 guineas on a single horse race.

Baron.

And you came from England without breaking your neck.

Reitbahn.

In England I could have almost broken my neck with pleasure. There it is a death that does a man immortal honour.

Narcisse.

Narciss.

If you had had that honour in England, I should not have been so near having the honour of getting my neck broke to-day.

Reithahn.

Oh ! a trifle ! But, my dear Elinor, did you never speak to the Major about his pyebalds ?—would not that set do admirably for our wedding-carriage ?

Eleonora.

The Major's horses are beautiful indeed ; I have often looked on them with pleasure.

Baroness.

Poh ! you know nothing of horses, child ! *Li-fette*, is dinner on the table ?

Reithahn.

Pardon me, Madam, I should not like a wife who did not doat on a fine horse. That's what they call in France *la belle passion*.—But may not the Major part with his pyebalds to us ? Some hundred ducats may perhaps make the matter easy.—Soldiers are seldom rich.—Excuse me, Major, I speak plainly, and without ceremony.

Major.

Major.

Oh! there is no offence in the world. We are seldom indeed very rich, and we can't afford to get so deep in debt as you men of fashion in the capital.

Reitbahn.

Very true indeed—our money is as fluctuating as your's. It is only with country gentlemen, like my good father-in-law the Baron here, that it remains.

Baron.

Be as wisely economical as we are—spend less in horses, in carriages, in foreign cooks, foreign ragouts, and foreign wines—go somewhat seldomer to Paris to bring back the monkey tricks, the foolish fashions of the petits maitres of France; do this, and you will save your money, and gain a little more credit to your understandings. I love to speak plainly too.

Narcisse.

A little too plainly, Baron.—It is what we call *passion insupportable*.

Reitbahn.

For my part, I think the Baron is quite in the right. I have known half a score families ruined

ed by one journey to Paris ; and all they had in exchange was to be laughed at there when they went, and here when they returned. Give me London, 'tis quite another sort of place.—With a proper skill in horse flesh, a man may make his fortune at London as soon as in Paris.

Baron.

For my part, I like London no better than Paris. They can ride indeed, which they call hunting.—But they know almost nothing of the real substantial chace either in France or England.—I would not give the Major's greyhounds for all the dogs and horses of Paris or London.

Major.

My dear Baron, don't talk of such a trifle.

Baron.

I say again I would not exchange your present for all the frippery of Paris and Versailles put together.

Narrisse.

(*Aside.*) This same Baron is a *barbare déterminé*.

X

Enter

Enter the Maitre d'Hotel and Servants, who range themselves on each side of the door.

Bertrand.

My Lady, dinner is on the table.

Baron.

I am very happy to hear it.

Reitbahn.

I'll do you reason there, Baron. But a propos, when do my sweet Elinor and I exchange rings ?

Baroness.

This evening, it will be time enough for that ceremony.

Reitbahn.

'Tis but, as you say, a ceremony—our hearts have been long exchange'd, eh ! my love !

Narcisse.

Oh ciel !—I can hardly stir.

Baroness.

Some of you give the Count your arms to support him into the eating-room.

(Two servants assist him to walk.)

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

And my arm is for my dear Mamma.

Baron.

Major, give your's to my daughter.—(*Aside to the Captain.*) Captain, that poor Major! I scarce know whether I should laugh or cry for him. I could have wished I had known him six weeks sooner.

Captain.

He would have shown you such sport with his greyhounds.

Baron.

He is a brave fellow faith.—I pity him from my soul.

A C T

A C T II.

Bertrand, Lifette, and Servants.

Bertrand.

YOU are sure, Lifette, you have taken the Dutch napkins for coffee.

Lifette.

Certainly the finest damask ones.

Bertrand.

She charged me to take care of that.

Lifette.

Yes, yes, every thing fine must make its appearance to-day. (*To the Servants.*) Place the table here. (*They place a table for coffee near another small one, with bottles of liqueurs and glasses.*)

Bertrand.

These are handsome napkins indeed.

Lifette.

Lifette.

Look here in the middle the whole Dutch fleet in a storm. The Count de Narcisse hates the Dutch ; but he must love those napkins whether he will or no, else my Lady will be in a storm too.

Bertrand.

She was not perfectly calm at dinner ; her daughter did not behave quite to her liking.

Lifette.

How ?

Bertrand.

She sat between the Major and her husband that is to be ; and really she treated the Count as he had been already her husband ; scarce spoke a word to him, but addressed all her discourse to the Major.

Lifette.

And the Count was angry at her silence.

Bertrand.

Not a whit ; he had got upon horses with the Captain, and thought of nothing else.

Lifette.

Lisette.

And the fine gentleman my Lady admires so much, how was he employed?

Bertrand.

In suffering. He could not eat a morsel after my Lady had stammered out the confession that her cook was not French. Then the perfumes I had burnt by my Lady's orders happened to be precisely what the Count can't endure. So he sat with his handkerchief steeped in lavender water at his nose. I am convinced, said he faintly at last, that I have the strength of a horse, since I have survived that abominable stink.

Lisette.

And the Baroness survived the remark!

Bertrand.

I believe she did not altogether hear it, being occupied at the time in giving orders about the music. But the music was as bad as the frankincense.—The Count pray'd them for heaven's sake to stop before they had got through the first minuet. Spare my ears, said he; leave me one sense untortur'd, for the love of God.—I thought
my

my Lady would have broke out at that.—But the Count made an apologising bow, and addressed a few French words particularly to her. So she was half pacified, and said nothing.

Lisette.

And what did the Baron say to all this ?

Bertrand.

Nothing. He had got too good an appetite at courting to think of any thing but his dinner ; sometimes he put in a few words about the Hungarian greyhounds, but nobody minded him except the Major, who seems always the most easily diverted with his *bon mots*. After dinner the Baron said a great many, having drank bumpers pretty liberally with the Major. He was very familiar with the Count de Narcisse, who look'd half angry, half afraid at him, as I have seen a little boy with our great house dog, when he wanted to paw him for better acquaintance. But I stay too long. They were half through the duet when I left them. I leave you in good company. Here comes our friend the notary.

Exit.

Enter

Enter Notary.

Lifette.

Mr Notary, you are rather too early. They have not yet done dinner.

Notary.

But as we say, Miss, *vigilantibus jura scripta sunt*. Better too early than too late. I know that the great ones of the earth don't sign marriage-contracts till the evening ; but I can wait their pleasure.

Lifette.

I have some doubts, Mr Notary, if our marriage will take place.

Notary.

Not take place—*impedimenta* ! are there any obstacles in the way ?

Lifette.

Hum ! none of any consequence ; but before signing this contract, our bridegroom is going to try four wild, fiery, pyebald horses, and may chance to break his neck in the experiment.

Notary.

Notary.

No sure ; that would be very unfair to the Lady Eleonora.—We distinguish, Miss, in that case, between the *ante* and the *post*.—Before marriage it is *contra pactum* in the husband to break his neck—after, if he shall be so disposed, why not—*sibi imputet*, as we say.—But you joke, I suppose, as usual—always gay, always jocular ; —but when shall I have the honour to draw a little sweet *contractum matrimonii* for you ?

Lisette.

To cure me of gaiety, eh !

Notary.

Ah ! you little waggish rogue ! But young and beautiful as you are, have you no compassion for the *sexus masculinus* ?

Lisette.

Why don't you marry, Mr Notary ? Have you no compassion for the *sexus femininus* ?

Notary.

If I had but time to set forth my case to you,

Y

Lisette.

Lifette.

To me?

Notary.

Yes, to you, my little charmer. But hold, here comes the contracting party of the one side.

Enter the Count de Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

These folks will never have done dancing. Oh ! Lifette, have you ordered the Major's pyebalds to my carriage?

Lifette.

Yes, Sir, I believe they wait.

Reitbahn.

This gentleman, I suppose, is the notary,

Notary.

At your service, most noble Count,

Reitbahn.

Bravo ! I have heard you are a man of abilities. Skilled in horse flesh, I make no doubt.

Notary.

Notary.

Why, as to horse flesh—it does not enter into my ordinary occupations—and yet I may boast a little skill there too ; as to knowing a horse, I may say, though not altogether *peritus*, neither am I altogether *imperitus*.

Reitbahn.

I knew that a scholar like you could not be ignorant in that way. Will you do me the favour to see if the Major's horses are put to my carriage.—Take a look of them, and tell me your opinion.

Notary.

Exofficially I may, Sir, but without warranting my judgment in such matters. *De talibus non rurat praetor.* (*Exit Notary.*)

Reitbahn.

Come hither, Lifette ; I have some serious questions to ask of you, if you will answer me sincerely. I think you have always found me your very good friend ; here's a small earnest of my continuing so. (*Gives her money.*)

Lifette.

Lisette.

Oh ! there was no occasion for this, Count, to ensure my sincerity to serve you.—What is it you would wish to know ?

Reitbahn.

Tell me frankly, has not your young Lady some little inclination for Major Reinberg ?

Lisette.

Some little inclination ?—(*Aside.*) . If I could frighten him from the match now.—Will you be sure not to betray me if I should tell ?

Reitbahn.

Betray you !—Upon the faith of a gentleman, not I.

Lisette.

Nay, but swear.

Reitbahn.

May my best horse break his wind if I do !

Lisette.

I may venture to tell you then, that my young Lady loves the Major—to desperation !

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Indeed!—but I began to suspect as much—let me alone for an eye that way—but she shan't stay an hour here after our marriage—I will drive her off so quickly, so quickly—that the Major shall kill his horses before he gets a sight of her.

Lisette.

But you forget, my dear Count, that the Major has had abundance of opportunity for having fights of her already.

Reitbahn.

But never in the absence of her mother.

Lisette.

Her mother is sometimes absent, without being out of the room.—The Baroness (between ourselves) has her thoughts employed about her own concerns—she has herself a small degree of *tendre* for Captain Edelfee.

Reitbahn.

So, so! but indeed I saw some ogling at dinner—let me alone for observation—your family is a busy one.

Lisette.

Lifette.

But for all this, Count, you must not think any harm of our family.—My young Lady is too virtuous, and so is the Baroness.—But who can help their inclinations ?

Reitbahn.

Very true ; but I should not like my wife to have inclinations for another man.—I'll be hang'd now if the Major's pyebalds have not bewitch'd her—and I'm not much surpris'd at it.—

Enter Notary.

Well, Mr Notary, are the horses put to my carriage ?

Notary.

They are ready, Sir.

Reitbahn.

And you are ready too, I hope, Mr Notary. You shall go in the carriage with me, and give me your opinion on the going of the pyebalds.

Notary.

(*With a voice of fear.*) You do me a great deal of honour, most noble Sir ; but notwithstanding

standing I beg to be excused ; I am not skilful enough to pronounce any judgment on that point,—I am indeed, as one may say, *ignoramus* ; perfectly ignorant I protest.

Reitbahn.

Nay, you told me a little ago, you knew horse flesh very well. I like you the better for your modesty ; the most knowing are always the most diffident—you shall positively accompany me. You shall see how I can drive ; drive to a hair's breadth.

Notary.

But my business, respected Sir—consider a notary, and a man of business.—You will drive all ideas of law quite out of my head.

Reitbahn.

No, no, only jumble them closer like nuts in a basket.

Notary.

But think, Sir, I pray you ; it is *quasi crimen* in you to ask me, one of the *delicta graviora* putting one in fear on the highway.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Not at all, I never keep the highway ; to try the horses goings, we always drive out of the road.

Notary.

Be entreated, Sir, be obsecrated to excuse me.

Reitbahn.

No apologies, no excuses ; you must go indeed.

Notary.

Since it must be so—I protest—Lifette—pity me.

Exeunt.

Lifette.

If he should break his neck, and the Notary escape—We may still have occasion for a sweet little *contractum matrimonii*.

Bertrand. (On entering.)

Lifette, the coffee.—They have risen from table, and are coming hither.

Exit with Lifette.

Enter

Enter the Count de Narcisse and Captain Edelfee.

Narcisse.

At last, thank heaven ! we have got through that execrable dinner.—I would rather have added 500 Louis more to my debts than have come to this barbarous house.

Captain.

Things were not quite *comme il faut*, to be sure ; but such as they were, they were given with welcome.

Narcisse.

That welcome is the very Devil—But what's welcome without any thing to eat ? The dishes were so abominably dressed, that, if my appetite had not been spoiled by the very sight of them, I should be hungrier now than when I sat down to table. Then the stink of that vile frankincense, the braying of that music, and the trampling of those savages of servants, bounding about with their red locks and blouzy faces, like fireworks in a rejoicing day—splashing soup, overturning plates, and tumbling over one another. The miserable jokes of that vulgar Baron, and the tiresome apologies of his ridiculous wife—

Z

altogether

altogether made up, such a scene as my nerves were perfectly unequal to. One must be a Cofack, and have starv'd through a campaign, to relish such a dinner.

Captain.

You are too delicate in those matters, Count ; much too delicate indeed,

Narcisse.

So the people of this country always tell us who come from the *delices de Paris*. But you Edelfee, who have been in France, have you patience to dine here sometimes ?

Captain.

Very often, and I know no house where I am happier.

Narcisse.

Oh ! *pour cela*, you may have reason. You foldiers must always be in love ; and the Major and you come here, I suppose, *pour badiner un peu* with the Baroness and her daughter.

Captain.

Who, I ? with the Baroness ?

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

Why, to say truth, that would require nerves too ; but the girl, though shockingly awkward, is tolerably handsome ; and the Major's attentions to her were too marked to be mistaken.

Captain.

That may very well be ;—but the Major is a little too late.

Narcisse.

Not at all, rather a little too early. My own cousin Reitbahn is likely to play an enviable part here.

Captain.

Why, to say truth, 'tis an odd match for a man of his fortune ; but there is no time for his withdrawing now.

Narcisse.

I have some regard for him as my relation, and would save him from this match if I could. I wish I had known a little sooner the *carte du pays* here. This brute of a Baron, who has the assurance to call me plain Narcisse with an air of familiarity, and sputters at Paris with his mouth
full

full of greasy soup.—But for this time there is no help. *Il faut burler avec les loups.* I hope we shall meet in town, and if he speaks to me there, I shall know how to treat him.

Captain.

But it will be prudent to dissemble here. As to the marriage, if we could but gain a little delay, something might be done yet to get your cousin out of the scrape.—But take care that the Baron don't suspect our dislike at it. That would spoil all.

Narcisse.

Oh! never fear me. I shall stroke the bear, not gall him, for my own sake.

Enter the Baron, Baronefs, Eleonora, and the Major.

Baron.

So you gave us the slip, Count; you should not have escaped else.

Narcisse.

Pardon me, I only came before to wait here for the Baronefs and you.

Baronefs.

Baroness.

The Count is always so polite!

Baron.

Here, Major, is an admirable liqueur—some of my best *Rosoli*—a drop of it worth all the coffee in the world.

Major.

I seldom drink coffee.

Baron.

I thought so; you are a man of sense. Our tastes agree wonderfully.

Baroness.

Count, will you do me the honour to sit by me?

Narcisse,

With infinite pleasure.

Baron.

Narcisse, you made no dinner to-day. Your overturn, I suppose, turn'd your stomach, eh!

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

I confess, my dear Baron, it deranged me a little; I must re-establish myself by fasting a while.

Baron.

I never knew fasting re-establish any body. If you want setting up, let me 'recommend a glass or two of my *Rosoli*.

Baroness.

Oh! no *Rosoli*, my dear, if you please, for the Count; his nerves are too delicate for so strong a liqueur.

Baron.

What you please, my chuck; you know I always submit to your opinion in those matters.

Baroness.

I hope, Sir, you find yourself better.

Narcisse.

With a little care and a spare diet, I hope to be soon perfectly recovered.

Baroness.

It will afford me the greatest satisfaction.—
Lisette, the card table; but, a propos, the evening

ing is so very fine, we may play in my grotto in the garden, if the Count de Narcisse approve of it.

Narcisse.

I will attend your Ladyship wherever you please.

Baroness.

What game do you choose to play?

Narcisse.

Whist is the only game play'd now; that is one good thing the English savages have taught us.

Baroness.

The Count, Captain Edelsee, and I; who shall make a fourth hand?

Narcisse.

Ma'moiselle undoubtedly. We must have a Lady for the fourth hand.

Baroness.

I meant to engage a little party at picquet for her with the Count de Reitbahn.

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

But my cousin Reitbahn is engaged in a party with the Major's pyebalds ; so we must have Ma'moiselle of our party.

Baronefs.

Since you desire it, Sir.—And you, my dear, (to the Baron) what becomes of you ?

Baron.

The Major and I will take a turn in the garden, but first have a single glass of the Rosoli. He is out of spirits to-day, and I wish to enliven him.

Baronefs.

But I hope you have given up your shooting excursion.

Baron.

For this afternoon, my dear, I will sacrifice my shooting to such good company.

Baronefs.

That's kind of you.—Does the Count de Narcisse drink coffee ?

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

A little, a very little—after the agitation of my fall it is heating.

Baroness.

Pardon me, 'tis excellent for quieting the nerves.

Baron.

Major, if you and I have got any nerves, which is more than I know of, I think a glass of this liqueur must be better for them than mawkish coffee. Come, let me fill for you.

Major.

If you please, a little ; I dare not venture on much. So, so, not a bumper.

Baron.

Why, this glass don't hold a bumper.

Narcisse.

The coffee is excellent.

Baroness.

I got it from my sister, who has a correspondent in Turkey who sends it her.—Another dish,
Captain.

A a

Captain.

Captain.

If you please ; I never drank any so good in my life.

Baroness.

Why did not my son Reitbahn stay to drink it. He has so outrageous a passion for horses.

Narcisse.

Some of his passions seem not so very outrageous.—As a bridegroom he seems tolerably composed.

Baron.

(*To the Major.*) This same Count has some observation I see. But come, has nobody any news ? I love rational conversation after dinner ; that is, when I am ^{ir}prevented from shooting.

Baroness.

The Count can give us much intelligence if he pleases.—He comes from court, and must know how things are going on.

Narcisse.

The court—Oh ! the court is quite *fade* ; *ennuyante* to a degree. If it were not for other circles,

circles, we should have no topics of conversation.

Captain.

A propos of topics—Do you know, Baron, that your neighbour *Lanbrand* has let his house and grounds, and is going to fettle in town.

Baron.

Let his grounds, what a fool! He had more game on his park than any of its size in Bavaria—To leave so many hares and pheasants, and to think of living in a town.

Captain.

But he takes his wife with him, Baron.

Baron.

Hum! as to his wife—But I believe you are mistaken; 'tis his wife has taken him with her. Every body knows, except *Lanbrand* himself, why she likes the town.—Her game lies there.—You understand me, Count.

Narcisse.

Knows, why every body has forgotten that eternal intrigue by this time; it is now near six months old.

Baroness.

Baroness.

For my part, I believe the whole story a piece of malice against the Countess.

Baron.

I don't care a rush for the Countess ; 'tis the game I regret—somebody will farm the estate, for the mere sake of killing it.—But let's forget him and his folly.—Give us your politics, Count; next to courting I like politics. What say you courtiers to the state of Europe ?

Narcisse.

Why, they who pretend to be in the secret talk of a grand alliance.

Baron.

Against the Turks, I could hold a wager. They have a frontier there, one of the finest quiet uninhabited tracks, where, I am told, one may run down a score of bucks in a day. The Emperor must have his eye on that.

Narcisse.

No, I am told that is not in contemplation at present. You have heard perhaps, Baron, that the Sultan is sick.

Baron.

Baron.

Heaven forbid ! when was he taken ill ?

Narcisse.

Some time ago I am told ; a disease of long standing.

Baron.

Of long standing—why he run this morning as well as ever a dog did in his life ;—he and Bella, I told you, killed six hares a piece.

Narcisse.

(*Aside to the Captain.*) Quel bête !

Major.

You mistake, my dear Baron ; 'tis not of your greyhound the Count talks, but of the Emperor of the Turks, whom they call the Sultan.

Baron.

Why did he not say the Emperor of the Turks then ? Who should have guess'd that the Emperor of the Turks and my dog were namesakes.

Narcisse.

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Narcisse.

Oh ciel!—(*Afide.*) When does our party begin, Madam? (*To the Baronefs.*)

Baronefs.

Immediately, if you please.

(*They rise from table.*)

Narcisse.

Will you allow me the honour of conducting you?

Baron.

So you are going to ombre, and so soon. Major, you don't like cards; you and I can have a little rational conversation here.

Baronefs.

But you will follow us soon, my dear.

Baron.

When we have finished our—bottles.

Exeunt all but the Baron and Major.

Baron.

I am happy to find myself at my ease with you Reinberg. That Paris petit maitre cramps me
like

like a tight shooting jacket. Come, boy, why so melancholy?—don't let that girl run so much in your head—here, take t'other gla's of Rosoli, and forget her.

Major.

Forget her! Ah! my dear Baron, you little know my heart, when you bid me forget her. Think what an unlucky fate is mine! I o have known such a woman as Eleonora; to have loved her to desperation; to have flattered myself that I was not quite indifferent to her—That her excellent father was not averse to my loving her—and yet—to see her about to pass into the arms of another, who perhaps neither knows her merit, nor deserves her tenderness.

Baron.

Why, 'tis unlucky, very unlucky, faith.—But since there is no help, why vex yourself about the matter. I have told you frankly that I would ten times rather have had you for my son-in-law than this jockey Count here—You with your simple commission, rather than him with his title and his fortune. I know your merits as a man and a soldier; and I should have been happy to have rewarded them with the hand of my Eleonora.

She

She is a charming girl, though I say it that should not. That girl, with 4000 florins a year, which I could have given you along with her ; with the use of my estate while I live, and the possession of it when I am gone, (and I believe there is more game on it than any of its size in Germany); all this, I say, might have made you and Eleonora as happy—as happy as my old eyes would have been in seeing your happiness.—But things have been ordered otherwise—and since they have, let us take t'other glass of Rosoli, and forget 'em.

Major.

Pardon me, my dear Baron—I can't swallow a drop—my heart is too full,

Baron.

But you shall positively.—Have you forgot that we are brothers?—We can still drink together, course together—nay, as for that matter, you may be my neighbour, though not my son. There is a pretty little ward of mine, whose estate is hard by here.—Her father was a soldier, and she loves the cloth.—I will recommend you with all my heart.

Major.

Major.

Nay, Baron, you must excuse me ; were she an Empress—after Eleonora, my heart cannot admit a thought of any other.

Baron.

Why that's unfortunate—What can I do for you then ?—Yet who knows what may happen ; it is odds that some ill broke horse may break the Count's neck in a twelvemonth ; and then, when she is a widow, you shall have my daughter, on the word of a gentleman.

Major.

Amidst all my misfortunes, Baron, it will be some consolation to think that I have gained such a friend as you.

Baron.

I have infinite obligations to you. Nay no thanks—between us they are unnecessary—I knew your father, and loved him. I do but return you the obligations I owed to him.—He got me out of a little scrape when I was in the army.

Major.

What, you served then.

B b

Baron.

Baron.

Several years ; but it was a long while ago, I was ensign under your father—and I might have been a general by this time, had not a little accident put me out of conceit with the army.

Major.

What was that, pray ?

Baron.

Why, on a march one day, when silence was rather necessary to our operations, a stag bounced out of a thicket in front of the line, not twenty yards from where I was.—The finest shot in the world—I could not for my soul resist it—crack went my piece, and the whole wood rung again—I killed him as dead as a hare ; but for all that, a cross Devil of a colonel clapped me under arrest, and, if it had not been for your father, whose services gave him weight with our commanding officer, it might have fared worse with me. I served out that campaign ; but resigned my commission when we went into winter quarters.—What, not to take such a shot when it offered!—I have ever since lived here, where I can shoot at every thing that comes in the way without being called to account for it.

Major.

Major.

You have chosen a life of happiness and independence.

Baron.

Why, yes, I have been happy enough—in every thing but this fool of a son-in-law, whom my wife—But we must not think of those little cross accidents—Come, let us join them now below stairs, and see how it has fared with this same postilion Count and your pyebalds. But be chearful I beg of you, were it but to vex him.—Here, Lifette—(*Lifette enters*) take care of this half bottle of Rosoli.

Exeunt Baron and Major.

Lifette.

Half a bottle—that's pretty well; I never saw the Major drink before—but when one is unhappy—Heigh ho!—I am unhappy too! I feel for that poor Major—(*Puts the bottle to her head*) Half a bottle (*Looking at it*)—'tis half a bottle still.—I have so much sympathy in my nature. (*Drinks again.*)

Enter

Enter the Count de Reitbahn and the Notary.

Reitbahn.

So, Lifette, I see you have a taste—the Baron's Rosoli is excellent.

Lifette.

I did but just drink your bride's health—every body drinks her health to-day.

Reitbahn.

You are perfectly in the right, child. Where is the company?

Lifette.

In the garden. My young Lady plays ombre with her Mamma and the Count de Narcisse. The rest of the party amuse themselves in walking. So, Mr Notary, you are still alive.

Notary.

I am, heaven be praised! once or twice I made my will *mentaliter*.

Reitbahn.

Would the Major had made his will, and left me the pyebalds.—Lifette, what shall I do to get those horses of the Major's?

Lifette.

Lisette.

I don't believe any money will bribe him to part with them. If any body can persuade him to it, it is his friend the Captain.

Reitbahn.

I hate to go about the bush for a bargain. But I would do any thing for the pyebalds. Do, child, try to get the Captain and him hither by themselves ; and you may whisper this friend of the Major's, that, if he can prevail on him to let me have the set, I will present him with an excellent hunter as a reward for his good offices.

Lisette.

That is quite in our way ; I see you know the world, Count, and are a man one would like to be of use to. I'll fetch them presently. *Exit.*

Reitbahn.

*Mr Notary, you will be ready to be of use too in this bargain. If the Major sells me his horses, I double your fees for my contract of marriage.

Notary.

The horses, most honoured Count, are indeed, as one may say, *magnificentissimi*.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

What fire ! what movements !

Notary.

They have been but a short while in the plough, I presume.

Reitbahn.

In the plough—what a fool you are ! did you ever hear of such high bred horses being in yoke?

Notary.

I have seen pyebald horses in the plough.

Reitbahn.

I have seen lawyers in bedlam—yet all lawyers are not mad, though some of them are fools, and many of them knaves.

Notary.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! that is pleasant.—To compare lawyers, *jurisconsulti*, to horses ; to animals, who have no intellect, no reason, which we call *ratio-cinium*.

Reitbahn.

No reason, horses no reason, who told you so ?
Notary.

Notary.

All the philosophers say so.

Reitbahn.

Philosophers—what should they know of horse-flesh? They generally walk a-foot, as I take it.—Did you never hear in your *corpus juris* of that wife Emperor, I forget his name, who made his horse a consul.

Notary.

Such things might be in old times, *priscis temporibus*, as we commonly express it.

Reitbahn.

In old times! I say *now*, if people knew their merits as I do, I should have broken my neck many a time if my horse had not been wiser than myself, and yet I am reckoned no fool. But hush! here they come.—You shall be a witness of our bargain.

Notary.

Fear not me! If the Major does but utter half a word of consent, it shall be a bargain, an *emptio venditio* directly.

Enter

Enter the Major and Captain Edelfee.

Major.

I was told, Count, you wished to speak with me.

Reitbahn.

Only to thank you for the pleasure your horses have given me.

Major.

You were pleased with their goings then.

Reitbahn.

Pleased, I am in raptures with them ; yet I don't play the jockey in praising them ; for I wish much to purchase them of you, Major.

Major.

I am sorry I can't accommodate you.

Reitbahn.

But why not, my dear Major ?—I will give you 400 ducats for the set.—I think my offer is a fair one.

Major.

They cost me within a trifle of that sum ; though I can't calculate exactly, as I had a fifth
one

one in the lot I purchased, I think, handsomer than these, which I use for riding.

Reitbahn.

I don't ask the fifth. I will give the 400 ducats for this set; or 500 if you will, for I would not haggle with you.

Major.

I am very much obliged to you, but I cannot possibly part with my horses.

Reitbahn.

But you shall not have to look out for a set; I have four Transylvanians that stood me nearly as much money. You shall have them and the 500 ducats to boot.—Try what you can do for me. (*Aside to the Captain.*)

Captain.

Five hundred ducats and the Count's set of Transylvanians.—Why I think, Major, the offer is such as merits consideration.

Major.

The offer is a handsome one—but I cannot accept it from the Count.

C c

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Why not from me?—Come, come, I guess the reason, and I will speak it out fairly. You are a little jealous of me, because I am to marry Eleonora.

Major.

Who, I? what have I to do with the marriage of Eleonora?

Reitbahn.

Nay, never be shy of owning it—Lifette told me of your attachment to her. But this matter you know was all settled, done and done, as one may say, before you knew her. 'Tis for her sake partly I am so anxious for the bargain. She talks so much of the Major's pyebalds.

Major.

Surely she does not desire me to part with them.—If she has praised them, it enhances their value to me.

Reitbahn.

You are the hardest man at a bargain I ever met with.—Do persuade him to let me have them. (*Aside to the Captain.*)

Captain.

Captain.

What can I do? You see there is no making any thing of him. (*Aside to the Count.*)

Reitbahn.

Perhaps I am a fool, but I have taken such a fancy to these pyebalds. Look at this ring, Major—it cost me 1200 florins, and was reckoned cheap of the money. If you don't choose money, I will give you this ring to boot with my Transylvanians.—Do I not bid like a buyer?

Major.

I confess you do most liberally; but in short I cannot part with my horses.

Captain.

Why, Count—a thought strikes me—that may perhaps bring you to one in this business.

Reitbahn.

Tell it me, for heaven's sake.

Captain.

I see you are no stranger to the Major's passion for Eleonora.

Major.

Major.

What now—peace, I pray you.

Reitbahn.

Never conceal it, Major ; I know it all, believe me.—But as to your thought, Captain, about the horses.

Captain.

Suppose the Major now—he is, it must be confessed, passionately fond of Eleonora.

Reitbahn.

Yes, yes, but the horses—

Captain.

You are passionately fond of the horses.

Reitbahn.

I own it.

Captain.

Suppose, I say, he should give you the horses—and you, on your part—

Reitbahn.

I will do any thing.

Captain.

Captain.

And you, on your part—should give up to him your pretensions to Eleonora.

Reitbahn.

What, my mistress—the Devil!

Major.

What do you mean?

Captain.

Nay, gentlemen, I speak as friend to you both.

Reitbahn.

My bride for the Major's horses.—That would be a swop with a vengeance.—But you can't be serious—eh!

Captain.

Serious, upon my honour; I think it would be much for the advantage of all parties. You would get a set of unequalled horses that suit you exactly; and he would get a wife that suits him much better than you.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Think what the family would say!—But the thing can't be—can it, Mr Notary?

Notary.

Heaven preserve you from it, most noble Count. 'Tis a bargain reprobated by the law—*pactum turpe*, as we wisely express it.

Captain.

(*Aside to the Notary.*) I'll cut off both your ears, if you say a word against the bargain.

Notary.

There may be instances of such excambion, but they are rare, very rare, *neutiquam de consuetudine*.

Captain.

Most things that are good are rare. Do you wish to have your bones broke? (*Aside.*)

Notary.

We must at least have the consent of parties. *Consensum sponsae et parentum.*

Captain.

Captain.

I have no doubt of obtaining that. Lifette has told the Count how it stands with the affections of Eleonora. (*Aside to the Notary.*) Fifty ducats if the exchange takes place.

Reitbahr.

Why, I believe she is not so much enamoured of me as I am of the pyebalds—and yet I don't know—

Notary.

Parties are agreed, I see no obstacle in the way.—There are distinctions; a thing may be *infrequens*, yet not *illicitum*.

Reitbahr.

The Baroness will tear out my eyes.

Captain.

I think I can answer for the Baroness.

Reitbahr.

Major, you say nothing, to all this.

Major.

It depends entirely on you—I accept of it with pleasure.

Reitbahr.

Reitbahn.

And what say you seriously, Mr Notary ?
shall we have the law on our side ?

Notary.

The law most certainly will warrant the bargain. Every proprietor is entitled to sell his rights. The young Lady is not a *fidei-commissum*, and therefore may lawfully be sold or exchanged ; that is, the *jus in futuro*, which you have in her, may be set against the *jus in presenti*, which the Major has in his horses.

Reitbahn.

Well—Devil fetch me if, in point of inclination—you will stand by me all of you—and the horses will carry me off to-night.—Major—give me your hand—Is it a bargain ?

Major.

It is, my dear Count ; and one that I am grateful for beyond expression.

Captain.

So then that affair is concluded between you.—I go to acquaint the other parties concerned.
Exit hastily.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Glorious horses! you are mine then.—You must own, Major, that I am of a singularly accommodating disposition.

Major.

The most generous in the world. I shall owe the whole happiness of my life to it.

Reitbahn.

Hum!—that's as it may be *in futuro*, as Mr Notary says.—But as to our bargain, I will fairly say, I don't think you owe me quite so much. I shall easily find a wife; but you will have devilish good luck if you can pick up such another set of pyebalds.—Pray, what do you make of the fifth you mentioned?

Major.

You shall have him, Count, into the bargain.

Reitbahn.

Generous man! how shall I make you a return—I have ne'er another girl to toss into the scale.—But here they come—I shall need a little courage for the interview.

D d

Notary.

Notary.

If there are any *acta aut dicta* to certify or take down ; I am ready at command.

Enter the Baron, Baroness, Eleonora, Count de Narcisse, Captain Edelfee, and Lisette.

Baron. (Goes a little aside.)

Is it true, Reitbahn, that you have sold my daughter ?

Reitbahn.

The pied horses are mine.

Baroness.

How, Sir, sold my daughter !

Notary.

Not a sale, my Lady—not an *emptio venditio*, an *excambion* only, or exchange, as it is vulgarly called.

Baroness.

And you, Major, how have you dared to offer me such an affront ?

Major.

Major.

The Count de Reitbahn, Madam, prefers my horses to his bride, and for a chance of obtaining her, I would part with every thing in the world.

Baron.

'Tis not the Major, my love, that has given you any just cause of offence; 'tis the Count only, who has forgot his passion for Eleonora, in his better *passion*, as he calls it, for horse flesh.

Major.

I never had a thought so sacrilegious as that of purchasing your daughter. The Count only waves his pretensions; mine depend on your goodness, and the inclination of Eleonora.

Baroness.

And you, Sir, (*to the Count de Reitbahn*) do not imagine that so scandalous a bargain shall hold, or pass uncensured. I will complain of this indignity at court, and will not rest till I obtain satisfaction.

Reitbahn.

But the bargain, Madam, must hold, let me tell you.—You may complain of me as you please;

please; but the pyebalds are mine, and cannot be taken from me.

Narcisse.

Why, Baroness, if you will take my advice, you will let this foolish business rest where it is.—As for the court, I flatter myself that no complaint can make much impression there, if my cousin Reitbahn shall receive my support.

Baroness.

How! do you countenance so shameful an action as this?'

Narcisse.

I see nothing so extraordinary in the affair. A fiancée is not so near one as a wife, and I know abundance of people at court who, for such a set of horses, would willingly give their wives in exchange.

Baron.

Narcisse, for a man of abilities and of the world, you talk a little ignorantly.—A wife is a very different thing;—one may part with that piece of property at a very easy rate—though I would not part with mine for the world.

Narcisse.

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Narcisse.

Même chose, mon frere.

Baroness.

I am struck dumb with shame and indignation.

Baron.

Nay, nay, my dear, never vex yourself for trifles;—do make us all happy by giving Eleonora to my friend the Major.

Baroness.

The Major! how is the Major entitled to such a match as Eleonora.

Baron.

Entitled! why, by loving her, and being loved by her again. You look, I know, to riches, to rank.—But I have enough for both to live comfortably on; and as to rank, the Major's father was too brave a man for any one to ask about his birth. He was my Lieutenant-colonel, and I know did more service to the state than twenty Counts. The Major too can count his battles, while they count their quarters.—What says my little darling? what says my Eleonora?

Eleonora.

Eleonora.

Oh! my father!

Major.

(Kneeling to the Baroness.) Thus, Madam, let me implore you not to be inexorable to our mutual entreaties. No fortune is worthy of your daughter; will you, instead of it, accept of the purest love, of the tenderest attachment, of the warmest gratitude?

Eleonora.

Suffer me, my best Mamma, to join my entreaties to his. Let me add this to all your other goodness to your Eleonora.

Baron.

Come, my love, suffer yourself to be won—A Major on his knees—'Tis not like a soldier.

Major.

'Tis for the happiness of his whole life he prays.—The Baroness is too compassionate to make it miserable for ever.

Captain.

Allow me, Madam, to join my entreaties to theirs.

Reitbahn.

Reitbahn.

Why, our bargain, Major, did not cost half so many words.

Baroness.

Rife.—You shall find, Sir, (*to the Count*) that my daughter is not so insignificant as you would make her.—And with every person of honour and of worth, 'tis you, not her, that this infamous bargain disgraces. I am ashamed that I was so long blind to your unworthy offer. Give me your hand, Eleonora—take it, Major, and protect it against such insolence or folly for the future.

Major.

My dearest Madam—my life shall be dedicated to your service, and to the happiness of your daughter.

Eleonora.

My best, my kindest Mamma! I have not words to thank you for so much goodness.

Major.

And how shall I find them, Baron, to acknowledge such friendship as your's?

Baron.

Baron.

No compliments,—you know I don't deal in them—I will think of you every time your greyhounds run. Mr Notary, you shan't lose your fee; here's a marriage settlement for you to draw still. I give to my son-in-law 4000 florins a-year at present, and after my death—but I don't intend dying this great while—all my fortune to him and my daughter.

Notary.

And on the other part, *ex parte altera*, what does the Major engage for?

Major.

Every thing I do or ever shall possess shall be my Eleonora's.

Baron.

Very well; but don't set down the Bohemian greyhounds among your possessions.

Reitbahn.

Nor the fifth pyebald you promised me.

Notary.

Notary.

I am instructed sufficiently, *informatus sum*.
The instrument shall be drawn forthwith.

Exit Notary.

Narcisse.

Well, my good friends, you are all satisfied I see—and so am I. Though I have come fifty miles, and run a risk of breaking my bones, yet this bargain is a joke worth it all. How I shall make the court laugh at the adventure of Reitbahn's mistress, and the Major's pyebalds.

Major.

Hark you, Count ; I have some interest here, and may claim a title to speak. I would advise you to beware how you laugh at any thing in this house. You understand me.

Narcisse.

Why, upon second thought, *Monsieur le Major*, I believe I shall not trouble myself to think any more either of this house or of you.

Major.

It will mortify neither of us.

E e

Narcisse.

Narcisse.

Allons, mon cousin, partons.

(*A Groom enters, and whispers Reitbahn.*)

Reitbahn.

Yes, I am ready to go, for the pyebalds are at my carriage, and the Tranfylvanians follow in hand.—Baron and Baroness, allow me to bid you farewell. I should be heartily sorry if you thought I shewed any disrespect to your daughter. But, upon my honour, there is not another young lady in Bavaria whom I should have so long hesitated to exchange against such an incomparable set of pyebalds.

Exit Reitbahn and Narcisse.

Baron.

Thou art an incomparable blockhead.—But I thank you notwithstanding, because you have been the occasion of my Eleonora's being happy with a worthy man. Come, my chuck, you must bustle for our marriage dinner to-morrow. Invite all our neighbours, except that fool Landbrand, who is parting with so fine a manor. As for the game of the wedding-feast, trust that to the Major and me.

F I N I S.

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